

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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THE DUKE'S CHILDREN.

BY ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

CHAPTER LIX. NO ONE CAN TELL WHAT
MAY COME TO PASS.

THEN Lord Silverbridge necessarily went down to Matching, knowing that he must meet Mabel Grex. Why should she have prolonged her visit? No doubt it might be very pleasant for her to be his father's guest at Matching, but she had been there above a month! He could understand that his father should ask her to remain. His father was still brooding over that foolish communication which had been made to him on the night of the dinner at the Bear-garden. His father was still intending to take Mabel to his arms as a daughter-in-law. But Lady Mabel herself knew that it could not be so! The whole truth had been told to her. Why should she remain at Matching for the sake of being mixed up in a scene, the acting of which could not fail to be disagreeable to her?

He found the house very quiet and nearly empty. Mrs. Finn was there with the two girls, and Mr. Warburton had come back. Miss Cassewary had gone to a brother's house. Other guests to make Christmas merry there were none. As he looked round at the large rooms he reflected that he himself was there only for a special purpose. It was his duty to break the news of his intended marriage to his father. As he stood before the fire, thinking how best he might do this, it occurred to him that a letter from a distance would have been the ready and simple way. But then it had occurred to him also, when at a distance, that a declaration of his purpose face to face was the simplest and readiest

way. If you have to go headlong into the water you should take your plunge without hesitating. So he told himself, making up his mind that he would have it all out that evening.

At dinner Lady Mabel sat next to his father, and he could watch the special courtesy with which the duke treated the girl whom he was so desirous of introducing to his house. Silverbridge could not talk about the election at Polpenno, because all conversation about Tregear was interdicted in the presence of his sister. He could say nothing as to the Runnymede Hunt and the two thunderbolts which had fallen on him, as Major Tisto was not a subject on which he could expatiate in the presence of his father. He asked a few questions about the shooting, and referred with great regret to his absence from the Brake country.

"I am sure Mr. Cassewary could spare you for another fortnight," the duke said to his neighbour, alluding to a visit which she now intended to make.

"If so he would have to spare me altogether," said Mabel, "for I must meet my father in London in the middle of January."

"Could you not put it off to another year?"

"You would think I had taken root and was growing at Matching."

"Of all our products you would be the most delightful, and the most charming—and we would hope the most permanent," said the courteous duke.

"After being here so long I need hardly say that I like Matching better than any place in the world. I suppose it is the contrast to Grex."

"Grex was a palace," said the duke, "before a wall of this house had been built."

"Grex is very old, and very wild—and very uncomfortable. But I love it dearly. Matching is the very reverse of Grex."

"Not I hope in your affections."

"I did not mean that. I think one likes a contrast. But I must go, say on the first of January, to pick up Miss Cassewary."

It was certain, therefore, that she was going on the first of January. How would it be if he put off the telling of his story for yet another week, till she should be gone? Then he looked around, and thought himself that the time would hang very heavy with him. And his father would daily expect from him a declaration exactly opposed to that which he had to make. He had no horses to ride. As he went on listening he almost convinced himself that the proper thing to do would be to go back to London, and thence write to his father. He made no confession to his father on that night.

On the next morning there was a heavy fall of snow, but nevertheless everybody managed to go to church. The duke, as he looked at Lady Mabel tripping along over the swept paths in her furs and short petticoats and well-made boots, thought that his son was a lucky fellow to have the chance of winning the love of such a girl. No remembrance, no suspicion of Miss Boncassen came across his mind as he saw them close together. It was so important that Silverbridge should marry, and thus be kept from further follies! And it was so momentous to the fortunes of the Palliser family generally that he should marry well! In thinking so it did not occur to him that the granddaughter of an American labourer might be offered to him. A young lady fit to be Duchess of Omnium was not to be found everywhere. But this girl, he thought, as he saw her walking briskly and strongly through the snow, with every mark of health about her, with every sign of high breeding, very beautiful, exquisite in manner, gracious as a goddess, was fit to be a duchess! Silverbridge at this moment was walking close to her side—in good looks, in gracious manner, in high breeding her equal—in worldly gifts infinitely her superior. Surely she would not despise him! Silverbridge at the moment was expressing a hope that the sermon would not be very long.

After lunch Mabel came suddenly behind the chair on which Silverbridge was sitting, and asked him to take a walk with her. Was she not afraid of the snow? "Perhaps

you are," she said, laughing. "I do not mind it in the least." When they were but a few yards from the front door, she put her hand upon his arm, and spoke to him as though she had arranged the walk with reference to that special question: "And now tell me all about Frank."

She had arranged everything. She had a plan before her now, and had determined, in accordance with that plan, that she would say nothing to disturb him on this occasion. If she could succeed in bringing him into good humour with herself, that should be sufficient for to-day. "Now tell me everything about Frank."

"Frank is Member of Parliament for Polpenno. That is all."

"That is so like a man, and so unlike a woman. What did he say? What did he do? How did he look? What did you say? What did you do? How did you look?"

"We looked very miserable, when we got wet through, walking about all day in the rain."

"Was that necessary?"

"Quite necessary. We looked so mean and draggled that nobody would have voted for us, only that poor Mr. Carbottle looked meaner and more draggled."

"The duke says you made ever so many speeches."

"I should think I did. It is very easy to make speeches down at a place like that. Tregear spoke like a book."

"He spoke well?"

"Awfully well. He told them that all the good things that had ever been done in Parliament had been carried by the Tories. He went back to Pitt's time, and had it all at his fingers' ends."

"And quite true."

"That's just what it was not. It was all a crammer. But it did as well."

"I am glad he is a member. Don't you think the duke will come round a little now?"

When Tregear and the election had been sufficiently discussed, they came by degrees to Major Tifto and the two thunderbolts. Silverbridge, when he perceived that nothing was to be said about Isabel Boncassen, or his own freedom in the matter of love-making, was not sorry to have a friend from whom he could find sympathy for himself in his own troubles. With some encouragement from Mabel the whole story was told. "Was it not a great impertinence?" she asked.

"It was an awful bore. What could I

say! I was not going to pronounce judgment against the poor devil. I daresay he was good enough for Mr. Jawstock."

"But I suppose he did cheat horribly."

"I daresay he did. A great many of them do cheat. But what of that? I was not bound to give him a character, bad or good."

"Certainly not."

"He had not been my servant. It was such a letter. I'll show it you when we get in!—asking whether Tifto was fit to be the depository of the intimacy of the Runnymede Hunt! And then Tif's letter; I almost wept over that."

"How could he have had the audacity to write at all!"

"He said that 'him and me had been a good deal together.' Unfortunately that was true. Even now I am not quite sure that he lamed the horse himself."

"Everybody thinks he did. Percival says there is no doubt about it."

"Percival knows nothing about it. Three of the gang ran away, and he stood his ground. That's about all we do know."

"What did you say to him?"

"I had to address him as Sir, and beg him not to write to me any more. Of course they mean to get rid of him, and I couldn't do him any good. Poor Tifto! Upon the whole I think I hate Jawstock worse than Tifto."

Lady Mabel was content with her afternoon's work. When they had been at Matching before the Polpenno election, there had apparently been no friendship between them—at any rate no confidential friendship. Miss Boncassen had been there, and he had had neither ears nor eyes for anyone else. But now something like the feeling of old days had been restored. She had not done much towards her great object—but then she had known that nothing could be done till he should again be in good humour with her.

On the Sunday, the Monday, and the Tuesday they were again together. In some of these interviews Silverbridge described the Polpenno people, and told her how Miss Tregear had been reassured by his eloquence. He also read to her the Jawstock and Tifto correspondence, and was complimented by her as to his prudence and foresight. "To tell the truth I consulted Mr. Lupton," he said, not liking to take credit for wisdom which had not been his own. Then they talked about Grex, and Killancodlem, about Gerald and the shooting, about Mary's love

for Tregear, and about the work of the coming session. On all these subjects they were comfortable and confidential—Miss Boncassen's name never having been as yet so much as mentioned.

But still the real work was before her. She had not hoped to bring him round to kneel once more at her feet by such gentle measures as these. She had not dared to dream that he could in this way be taught to forget the past autumn and all its charms. She knew well that there was something very difficult before her. But, if that difficult thing might be done at all, these were the preparations which must be made for the doing of it.

It was arranged that she should leave Matching on Saturday, the first day of the new year. Things had gone on in the manner described till the Thursday had come. The duke had been impatient, but had restrained himself. He had seen that they were much together, and that they were apparently friends. He too told himself that there were two more days, and that before the end of those days everything might be pleasantly settled!

It had become a matter of course that Silverbridge and Mabel should walk together in the afternoon. He himself had felt that there was danger in this—not danger that he should be untrue to Isabel, but that he should make others think that he was true to Mabel. But he excused himself on the plea that he and Mabel had been intimate friends—were still intimate friends, and that she was going away in a day or two. Mary, who watched it all, was sure that misery was being prepared for someone. She was aware by this time that her father was anxious to welcome Mabel as his daughter-in-law. She strongly suspected that something had been said between her father and her brother on the subject. But then she had Isabel Boncassen's direct assurance that Silverbridge was engaged to her! Now, when Isabel's back was turned, Silverbridge and Mabel were always together.

On the Thursday after lunch they were again out together. It had become so much a habit that the walk repeated itself without an effort. It had been part of Mabel's scheme that it should be so. During all this morning she had been thinking of her scheme. It was all but hopeless. So much she had declared to herself. But forlorn hopes do sometimes end in splendid triumphs. That which she might gain was so much! And what could she

lose? The sweet bloom of her maiden shame? That, she told herself, with bitterest inward tears, was already gone from her. Frank Tregear at any rate knew where her heart had been given. Frank Tregear knew that having lost her heart to one man she was anxious to marry another. He knew that she was willing to accept the coronet of a duchess as her consolation. That bloom of her maiden shame, of which she quite understood the sweetness, the charm, the value, was gone when she had brought herself to such a state that any human being should know that, loving one man, she should be willing to marry another. The sweet treasure was gone from her. Its aroma was fled. It behoved her now to be ambitious, cautious—and, if possible, successful.

When first she had so resolved, success seemed to be easily within her reach. Of all the golden youths that crossed her path no one was so pleasant to her eye, to her ear, to her feelings generally, as this duke's young heir. There was a coming manliness about him which she liked—and she liked even the slight want of present manliness. Putting aside Frank Tregear she could go nearer to loving him than any other man she had ever seen. With him she would not be turned from her duties by disgust, by dislike, or dismay. She could even think that the time would come when she might really love him. Then she had all but succeeded, and she might have succeeded altogether had she been but a little more prudent. But she had allowed her great prize to escape from her fingers.

But the prize was not yet utterly beyond her grasp. To recover it—to recover even the smallest chance of recovering it, there would be need of great exertion. She must be bold, sudden, unwomanlike—and yet with such display of woman's charm that he at least should discover no want. She must be false, but false with such perfect deceit, that he must regard her as a pearl of truth. If anything could lure him back it must be his conviction of her passionate love. And she must be strong—so strong as to overcome not only his weakness, but all that was strong in him. She knew that he did love that other girl—and she must overcome even that. And to do this she must prostrate herself at his feet—as, since the world begun, it has been man's province to prostrate himself at the feet of the woman he loves.

To do this she must indeed bid adieu to the sweet bloom of her maiden shame!

But had she not done so already when, by the side of the brook at Killancodlem, she had declared to him plainly enough her despair at hearing that he loved that other girl? Though she were to grovel at his feet she could not speak more plainly than she had spoken then. She could not tell her story now more plainly than she had done then; but—though the chances were small—perchance she might tell it more effectually.

"Perhaps this will be our last walk," she said. "Come down to the seat over the river."

"Why should it be the last? You'll be here to-morrow."

"There are so many slips in such things," she said, laughing. "You may get a letter from your constituents that will want all the day to answer. Or your father may have a political communication to make to me. But at any rate come." So they went to the seat.

It was a spot in the park from whence there was a distant view over many lands, and low beneath the bench, which stood on the edge of a steep bank, ran a stream which made a sweeping bend in this place, so that a reach of the little river might be seen both to the right and to the left. Though the sun was shining, the snow under their feet was hard with frost. It was an air such as one sometimes finds in England, and often in America. Though the cold was very perceptible, though water in the shade was freezing at this moment, there was no feeling of damp, no sense of bitter wind. It was a sweet and jocund air, such as would make young people prone to run and skip. "You are not going to sit down with all the snow on the bench," said Silverbridge.

On their way thither she had not said a word that would disturb him. She had spoken to him of the coming session, and had managed to display to him the interest which she took in his parliamentary career. In doing this she had flattered him to the top of his bent. If he would return to his father's politics, then would she too become a renegade. Would he speak in the next session? She hoped he would speak. And if he did, might she be there to hear him? She was cautious not to say a word of Frank Tregear, understanding something of that strange jealousy which could exist even when he who was jealous did not love the woman who caused it.

"No," she said, "I do not think we can sit. But still I like to be here with you.

All that some day will be your own." Then she stretched her hands out to the far view.

"Some of it, I suppose. I don't think it is all ours. As for that, if we cared for extent of acres, one ought to go to Bassetshire."

"Is that larger?"

"Twice as large, I believe, and yet none of the family like being there. The rental is very well."

"And the borough," she said, leaning on his arm and looking up into his face.

"What a happy fellow you ought to be!"

"Bar Tifo—and Mr. Jawstock."

"You have got rid of Tifo and all those troubles very easily."

"Thanks to the governor."

"Yes, indeed. I do love your father so dearly."

"So do I—rather."

"May I tell you something about him?"

As she asked the question she was standing very close to him, leaning upon his arm, with her left hand crossed upon her right. Had others been there, of course she would not have stood in such a guise. She knew that—and he knew it too. Of course there was something in it of declared affection—of that kind of love which most of us have been happy enough to give and receive, without intending to show more than true friendship will allow at special moments.

"Don't tell me anything about him I shan't like to hear."

"Ah, that is so hard to know. I wish you would like to hear it."

"What can it be?"

"I cannot tell you now."

"Why not? And why did you offer?"

"Because— Oh, Silverbridge?"

He certainly as yet did not understand it. It had never occurred to him that she would know what were his father's wishes. Perhaps he was slow of comprehension, as he urged her to tell him what this was about his father. "What can you tell me about him, that I should not like to hear?"

"You do not know? Oh, Silverbridge, I think you know." Then there came upon him a glimmering of the truth. "You do know." And she stood apart looking him full in the face.

"I do not know what you can have to tell me."

"No, no. It is not I that should tell you. But yet it is so. Silverbridge, what did you say to me when you came to me that morning in the square?"

"What did I say?"

"Was I not entitled to think that you—loved me?" To this he had nothing to reply, but stood before her silent and frowning. "Think of it, Silverbridge. Was it not so? And because I did not at once tell you all the truth, because I did not then say that my heart was all yours, were you right to leave me?"

"You only laughed at me."

"No; no; no; I never laughed at you. How could I laugh when you were all the world to me? Ask Frank—he knew. Ask Miss Cass—she knew. And can you say you did not know; you, you, you yourself? Can any girl suppose that such words as these are to mean nothing when they have been spoken? You knew I loved you."

"No; no."

"You must have known it. I will never believe but that you knew it. Why should your father be so sure of it?"

"He never was sure of it."

"Yes, Silverbridge; yes. There is not one in the house who does not see that he treats me as though he expected me to be his son's wife. Do you not know that he wishes it?" He fain would not have answered this; but she paused for his answer and then repeated her question. "Do you not know that he wishes it?"

"I think he does," said Silverbridge; "but it can never be so."

"Oh, Silverbridge—oh, my loved one, do not say that to me! Do not kill me at once!" Now she placed her hands one on each arm as she stood opposite to him and looked up into his face. "You said you loved me once. Why do you desert me now? Have you a right to treat me like that—when I tell you that you have all my heart?" The tears were now streaming down her face, and they were not counterfeit tears.

"You know," he said, submitting to her hands, but not lifting his arm to embrace her.

"What do I know?"

"That I have given all I have to give to another." As he said this he looked away sternly, over her shoulder, to the distance.

"That American girl!" she exclaimed starting back, with some show of sternness also on her brow.

"Yes—that American girl," said Silverbridge.

Then she recovered herself immediately. Indignation, natural indignation, would not serve her turn in the present emergency. "You know that cannot be. You ought to know it. What will your father say? You

have not dared to tell him. That is so natural," she added, trying to appease his frown. "How possibly can it be told to him? I will not say a word against her."

"No; do not do that."

"But there are fitnesses of things which such a one as you cannot disregard, without preparing for yourself a whole life of repentance."

"Look here, Mabel."

"Well?"

"I will tell you the truth."

"Well?"

"I would sooner lose all—the rank I have; the rank that I am to have; all these lands that you have been looking on; my father's wealth, my seat in Parliament—everything that fortune has done for me—I would give them all up, sooner than lose her." Now at any rate he was a man. She was sure of that now. This was more, very much more, not only than she had expected from him, but more than she had thought it possible that his character should have produced.

His strength reduced her to weakness.

"And I am nothing!" she said.

"Yes, indeed; you are Lady Mabel Grex—whom all woman envy and whom all men honour."

"The poorest wretch this day under the sun."

"Do not say that. You should take shame to say that."

"I do take shame;—and I do say it. Sir, do you not feel what you owe me? Do you not know that you have made me the wretch I am? How did you dare to talk to me as you did talk when you were in London? You tell me that I am Lady Mabel Grex—and yet you come to me with a lie on your lips—with such a lie as that! You must have taken me for some nursemaid on whom you had condescended to cast your eye! It cannot be that even you should have dared to treat Lady Mabel Grex after such a fashion as that! And now you have cast your eye on this other girl. You can never marry her!"

"I shall endeavour to do so."

"You can never marry her," she said, stamping her foot. She had now lost all the caution which she had taught herself for the prosecution of her scheme—all the care with which she had burdened herself. Now she was natural enough. "No; you can never marry her. You could not show yourself after it in your clubs, or in Parliament, or in the world. Come home, do you say? No, I will not go to your home.

It is not my home. Cold—of course I am cold—cold through to the heart."

"I cannot leave you alone here," he said, for she had now turned from him, and was walking with hurried steps and short turns on the edge of the bank, which at this place was almost a precipice.

"You have left me, utterly in the cold—more desolate than I am here even though I should spend the night among the trees. But I will go back, and will tell your father everything. If my father were other than he is—if my brother were better to me, you would not have done this."

"If you had a legion of brothers it would have been the same," he said, turning sharp upon her.

They walked on together, but without a word till the house was in sight. Then she looked round at him, and stopped him on the path as she caught his eye. "Silver-bridge!" she said.

"Lady Mabel."

"Call me Mabel. At any rate call me Mabel. If I have said anything to offend you—I beg your pardon."

"I am not offended—but unhappy."

"If you are unhappy, what must I be? What have I to look forward to? Give me your hand, and say that we are friends."

"Certainly we are friends," he said as he gave her his hand.

"Who can tell what may come to pass?" To this he would make no answer, as it seemed to imply that some division between himself and Isabel Boncassen might possibly come to pass. "You will not tell anyone that I love you."

"I tell such a thing as that?"

"But never forget it yourself. No one can tell what may come to pass."

Lady Mabel at once went up to her room. She had played her scene, but was well aware that she had played it altogether unsuccessfully.

LOCKED-UP LAND.

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

It has been calculated that land to the extent of fifty-two millions of acres is held in this country on the tenure explained in the first paper of this series, and that it is nominally in the hands of only seven thousand persons. These are actually the great landholders, for not one owns less than a thousand acres. The remnant of the land in the United Kingdom—that is the portion, as Mr. Arthur Arnold puts it, "of thirty-one million five hundred and

six thousand four hundred and forty-two, out of thirty-one million five hundred and thirteen thousand four hundred and forty-two people"—is some twenty millions of acres. Setting aside the parcels described as being less than one acre, the area is reduced to nineteen and a half millions of acres, divided among some three hundred and three thousand persons. These figures are extracted from the New Domesday Books, and must be accurate enough for all practical purposes. One-fifth of the area of the United Kingdom is held by five hundred and twenty-five persons—nobles, and nearly all peers of Parliament. They are twenty-eight dukes, thirty-three marquises, one hundred and ninety-four earls, fifty-two viscounts, and two hundred and eighteen barons. They own among them fifteen hundred and ninety-three separate landed estates, with an acreage of more than fifteen millions three hundred thousand, of an annual rental of a little over twelve millions and a half sterling. How this enormous territory has been accumulated it would now be as bootless to investigate as the source of fortunes made on the turf or the Stock Exchange. It was at least equally respectable, and nobody would desire at this moment to question titles protected by prescription. What is asked is whether these great estates, are under the existing law of primogeniture, settlement, and entail, as well administered as is consistent with public policy.

Until a little while ago it was in somewhat high-handed fashion declared that the maintenance of large estates under the present system was part and parcel of the British Constitution; for, it was argued, if you destroy the idea of heirship, what becomes of the Protestant succession, and all the rest of the good things we are thankful for? This superstition was part of that oligarchical scheme of rule which Lord Beaconsfield so wittily qualified as "Venetian." Certainly until the first Reform Bill, and probably until the last one, the English nobles ruled the State, not precisely as nobles, not exactly as a caste, but because they happened to be landholders, because they had the House of Lords entirely to themselves, and the House of Commons at least half filled by their friends and nominees. It mattered very little that members of the oligarchy were hopelessly ruined, that their estates were full fathom five deep in embarrassments of every kind. A peer might be glad to borrow ten pounds or to write a certificate

of the virtues of a patent medicine, but he was a peer all the same. He could not be made a bankrupt, and he could not be arrested for debt. His privileges are now somewhat abated, but the influence of the great landholders is very great politically, and almost absolute socially.

It is this virtue in land which is the cause of half of the agricultural difficulty at the present moment. Until the sense of the country was so distinctly expressed that the late Sir Robert Peel thought it was time to give way, an iniquitous tax was levied on foreign corn imported into this country. This was avowedly done to protect the English farmer, really—to raise the rents of the English landholder, who granted no leases, and took care to have the lion's share of the profit. Protection to the landlord then, to state the case fairly, raised the value of his land, soon to be enhanced by other causes.

When the incubus of the corn laws was thrown off, the prosperity of England became very great. Her commerce and revenue increased beyond all expectation or calculated proportion, and wealth grew great in the kingdom. Owing to the law, or rather custom favoured by law, of strict settlement, there was never much land in the market, never enough to bring its price down; while on the other hand the demand for it increased daily. All the people who had grown suddenly rich, grew mad to "gentilise" themselves by becoming landholders, and foolish prices were given for the old acres which were supposed to confer a certain social standing. Whenever an estate was in the market, it was bought at such a price that the investment could not, even with high-priced farms, be made to yield more than two per cent. A similar mania attacked people with smaller capital. If the successful ironmaster or coal-owner craved a landed estate, less wealthy people were anxious to go into farming—that is, farming on a large scale, according to English ideas. "Doosid gentlemanly occupation," Snooks would say to Ffooks; "bettah than being country doctah or parson." Ffooks agreed, his idea of farming being made up of fox-hunting all the winter, and looking at other people working all the summer. So Snooks and Ffooks took farms at a high rental, and lived at a high rate till low prices and bad seasons came. They are in a bad way just now, and their landlord is no better off.

To enquire how much money has been sunk in England during the past thirty years in buying land for more than it was worth, is about as useful as to ask how much the investors of this country flung away during the same period in foreign loans. Both sums are hopelessly gone, and there is no longer competition either for farms or loans. A great change has been brought about in English farming, and, for that matter, in American farming on the Atlantic seaboard, by the enormous grain production of the far West. Whether by a system of small proprietary farms England can be made to yield such rich crops as to set foreign competition at defiance is an open question, the probability at present being that the culture of grain will be in great measure abandoned in favour of pasture, and that cattle-feeding and dairy-farms will take the place of wheatfields. In any case it hardly seems probable that any advance in the price of real estate can take place for some time to come, unless in localities specially favoured by neighbourhood or transit.

What is to become of the landholder whose estate is strictly settled and encumbered with charges without number? All the dowagers and collaterals want their money, and he has half his farms unlet. Not only are they unlet, but they are likely to remain so, for he has no money to drain them, and, as they are, it would pay nobody to cultivate them. The system of strict settlement, of keeping the property in the family, is beginning to show its seamy side. The property holds together it is true, but very barely in these latter days. The incumbent can do nothing. If he could sell one-third of his property, and spend the proceeds in paying off charges and improving the remainder, he might preserve a sound estate; but he can do nothing of the kind. He has not a shilling to spend on farm-buildings, and no tenant will build without the lease which his landlord may not grant him. The very tenancy offered is fenced round with childish restrictions as to the rotation of crops and the sale of straw. In what other business, it may be asked, would any rational human being invest his money in order that he might receive the treatment of a vassal? Hence farms remain unlet by the score.

All this difficulty is distinctly referable to the superstition prevailing regarding land: that there is something peculiar in rent, as there is by law, beyond any other

claim. It is true that the English law of distraint is hardly so completely feudal and extravagant as the Scotch law of hypothec—which follows goods sold from a farm, the rent of which is unpaid, and recovers them from the innocent holder—but it is a stringent law nevertheless. All these questions, however, between landholder and tenant-farmer are being resolved without any violent legal wrench, simply by the law of supply and demand. Landholders have land to let, and they must either let it, become gigantic farmers themselves, or become hopelessly bankrupt. The demand for farms at any price has ceased. A new departure is taken in the relations between landlord and tenant. The vendor must attract the purchaser, or he will not buy. This is the complexion to which the question has come at last.

It is a dreadful picture, of course. It is horrible to think of the Earl of Square-acres looking aghast at his deserted farms and tumbledown homesteads, and wondering where "oh, where the devil are the rents." How devoutly his lordship wishes the property were his own, for then he could make it, or some of it, merchantable. If he could only cut wood right and left he might put up decent farm-buildings, and rebuild those labourers' cottages which are a shame and a scandal to the estate and the county. The people, when there are any, live in thatched huts with a couple of rooms, in which eight or ten people literally "pig" together. Lord Square-acres is by no means an indifferent or unenlightened nobleman. Very far from it. He has seen Lord Shaftesbury's model village, and knows perfectly what ought to be done on the estate. But what can he do? He is only a life-tenant, and cannot therefore be expected to devote all the income there is left after the dowagers have been secured to improvements. He cannot make any arrangement with his son, for the latter has only just gone to Eton.

The position of Squareacres, who is as good a fellow and as straight a rider as ever negotiated a bullfinch, is a common one, due mainly to the strange divorce between land and capital which superannuated feudal institutions have brought about. Money once eagerly invested in land, for reasons previously stated, has, in a thoroughly commercial sense, drifted away from land. If a self-made man can afford landed estate as a luxury he buys it, but neither now, nor at any time during the

last twenty years, has looked upon such a transaction through his old and tried business spectacles. He has employed his son's eyeglass or his wife's gold "pince-nez." He look at an investment paying two per cent. ? Ridiculous. His estate is his pleasure garden, his park, his playground, his toy to give him the "pied-à-terre" a justice of the peace and a prospective knight-of-the-shire must have. But, to do him justice, he has never looked upon his farms as business investments. This fact exposes the whole weakness of the land. At the prices which have ruled it has been a fancy article, but large estates cannot now be sold at old-fashioned prices. The future of English agriculture is seriously threatened, and money finds its way into other channels. There is little chance that land will attract capital until it sinks to such a price that it will pay for putting money into it under proper security and without childish restrictions. Consequently very much land is going to the bad altogether, and getting poorer and poorer every year. Money has, for all practical and fertilising purposes, gone away from the land, merely because land has not been permitted to change hands like cotton-mills, or iron-works, or ships, or money itself. Like the talent in the parable, it has remained. It has done nothing. If it had been, on an owner being too poor to work it, sold to the highest bidder, it would have been perpetually held by competent administrations, instead of which it has been doomed to the grip of the dead hand, and destined to the impecunious, the indifferent, or the imbecile.

It is hard upon any nation that the property in which it has the greatest interest should be reduced to the lowest terms. Mr. Lowe has, in one luminous sentence, pointed out the gist of lawyers' theories concerning the tenure of land. To understand this matter, Mr. Joshua Williams tells us, "the first thing the student has to do is to get rid of the idea of absolute ownership. Such an idea is quite unknown to the English law. No man is, in fact, the absolute owner of lands. He can only hold an estate in them." This is the verdict of the very highest authority upon the English law of real property. No claim to absolute ownership of land can be maintained upon the basis of existing law. The best title is known as the fee simple, which enables a man to deal with property unreservedly. A large part of England is held by the

tenure known as copyhold, a cumbrous entanglement now in tardy process of extinction. But to return to fee simple, or freehold, it is curious to mark that lawyers' theories should have such a communistic ring. To whom does the land then really belong? Mr. Froude, who is certainly neither leveller nor communist, has admitted that the land must be the property of the nation, the successive governments of which have permitted limited ownership to the end that "the land so held shall be administered to the general advantage." This is the theory. How far the "general advantage" has been consulted by English landholders may be considered presently. Mr. Lowe resumes the theory briefly and brilliantly. "Land," said Mr. Lowe, "is a kind of property in which the public must, from its very nature, have a kind of dormant joint interest with the proprietor." Here again is the communistic theory, which no rational being would wish to push to any such conclusion as the so-called nationalisation of land, or the imposition of any conditions upon the present holders of it. Private ownership, as Mr. Arthur Arnold points out, is the "strongest inducement" to increase the produce of the earth and "the happiness and well-being of its population."

It is not, therefore, proposed to demand an account of stewardship, or to interfere with ownership. It is, on the contrary, sought to make the landholders of England owners of their land, having direct control over it, and power, if they are so minded, to sell it to the highest bidder. It is not even suggested that the landholder who lets his estate run to weeds and waste, manifestly against the public interest, should be interfered with. All should be perfectly free—self-interest being a potent safeguard against sluggishness on the one hand and recklessness on the other. Mr. Drummond's saying, that "property has its duties as well as its rights," was a recognition of the principle of "dormant joint interest of the public" advanced in another form by Mr. Lowe; but theories of tenure are not safe ground to go upon; they lead to such curious conclusions.

If, for instance, it were advanced that the present great landholders of England only held their land as they sought to maintain, before the ballot was passed, that their tenants held the franchise—not as a "right," but as a "trust"—what account could they give of their stewardship? It is to be feared a very poor one.

Whether the extant great families of England improved on the administration of the Church they despoiled is quite an open question. Whether they have ever done so much for the poor as their predecessors is more than doubtful. That they devoured the Church lands and the Crown lands, and defrauded the nation of the land tax, which was supposed to be a commutation for feudal service, is a matter of history. It is unnecessary to unearth the records of William and Mary to show how the country has suffered by allowing the land-tax to be assessed by the landed classes. At William's accession the land-tax was made four shillings in the pound upon the annual value of all real property. Five years afterwards, when the "Venetian Signiory" had fully asserted its power, the Assessments Act was passed—to, in fact, get rid of future assessments altogether. From the Act of 1697, and the Statute of Anne in 1702, which confirmed it, the land-tax was merely a complementary charge liable for so much residue as could not be obtained by the taxation of personalty. Even this was continued by yearly Acts always based upon the Act of 1692. At times the tax fell as low as a shilling in the pound; but the climax of absurdity had yet to be reached. Under the monstrous administration of Pitt the tax was fixed as a perpetual charge of four shillings in the pound, and the tax was apportioned to each county—provision being made for redemption. The land-tax was thus made stationary—not flexible with increasing or decreasing values! What has been the result of stationary assessment? In the time of William and Mary the land-tax paid one fifth of the revenue—in 1875-6 it paid a little more than the seventieth.

Despite all the advantages secured to them by a government formed of themselves landowners have a poor account to render of their stewardship. They have gotten the better of their fellow citizens in the matter of land tax, of probate, and succession duty; but their position is nevertheless so desperate that they are obliged to cry aloud for help. Their estates are on their own showing for the most part in a miserable condition.

Lord Carington, a young nobleman whose faults are certainly not on the side of reticence, says: "Following the advice of my best friends during my father's lifetime, being twenty-two years of age, I re-entailed the estate. I inherited eleven years ago property in Bucks, in Lincoln-

shire, and in Wales. I found property had been bought in Bucks, and to pay for that property the Welsh estate had to be sold, and the money re-invested in the land purchased in Bucks. The farm-buildings were so bad on the Welsh property that it was calculated that the purchaser would have to expend one whole year's rental on them to put them in decent repair. Mind, I do not blame my father for this; but I do blame the strictness of the entail, which prevented him putting the buildings into such a condition as to enable the tenants to do justice to themselves and the land by which they got their living. The river Humber washed away five acres of good land at Winteringham, and formed an island in the bed of the river. As a tenant for life I could not afford to repel the attacks of the river or to accept the gifts of the ocean, for I could not charge the estate for permanent improvements, nor could I sell a single acre of the thirty-four square miles which I inherited. Under these circumstances what are the landlords to do? On all sides we hear of reductions and returns to tenants. These are duly chronicled in the newspapers with a certain grim humour as 'liberality of a landlord.' It keeps some tenants going, and saves the landlord having to cultivate, but ten per cent. reduction is no real use, and doesn't solve the question at all. . . . The time has come that the great question of entail should be calmly discussed. Many consider that the laws which allow a landowner, by his deed or by his will, to prevent his land being sold, seized, or lessened in size, either during his own life, or for many years after his death, are necessary for the very existence of the landed interest of England. May these laws not be a positive danger to the country, and one of the reasons for the present agricultural distress? In no way do I wish to introduce a principle that a living man may not do what he likes with his own—buy, sell, let, or farm as much as he chooses, leave it all to his eldest son, divide it amongst his children, or leave it entirely away. But though we properly respect the rights of the living, ought we not to curtail the power of the dead? The largest landowner in England and Scotland has a total of one million three hundred and fifty-eight thousand five hundred and forty-eight acres. I see no harm in that; there is no reason why he should not own two million acres; but what I do think wrong is that a landowner should, either by his

own act or by the deed of his predecessors, be saddled with an enormous tract of country of which it is impossible for him to get rid of a square yard, however necessary, however beneficial the sale of a small portion of it would be to the country, the estate, to his tenants, or to himself. I will try to show what the consequence is. In the north of the county (Bucks) I have two strong clay farms on my hands; one I cannot get a bid for, nobody will cultivate it at any rent. I say to my agent, 'What am I to do?' He answers, 'The buildings must be rebuilt, the worst land laid down in grass, the land drained and cleansed, and in two years you may get a tenant!' Very good; but all this ought to have been done years ago, and the tenant would have been saved, and the land would never have got into so miserable a condition. But the same millstone is round my neck that hampered my father, that I must wear till my death, my brothers as well, if they succeed me, and the land is not free till after our deaths, or the twenty-first birthday of an unborn heir. As tenant for life, I hoped against hope, trusted to the good season of 1879 to put things right. That season failed, the tenant is ruined, and the land starved. It is a small matter, one farm in hand, you will say; but look around us. I hear of a proprietor with four thousand acres on his hands, a Berkshire landowner with thirteen farms, and land thrown up in all directions. People would improve their properties if they could, but the majority cannot, as is shown by the committee of the House of Lords, consisting of the Duke of Richmond, Marquis of Salisbury, Earl of Derby, and Lord Egerton of Tatton, who reported, in 1870, that of twenty million acres in this country requiring drainage, only three million had been drained, and that, taking into account also all other necessary improvements, only one-fifth of the land had been properly dealt with. Is not this a serious state of things? Farmers say, 'It is not so much the low prices we complain of, but the yield is so bad.' What else can you expect? We shall be told that these views are dangerous to the Constitution, to the Queen, to the House of Lords, and to the welfare of England generally. But is it possible to deny how much good has been done by the gradual reforms that have been brought about in the present reign? Is it not better that questions of this importance should be properly and reasonably discussed on their merits, than

that strong opposition should be offered to their very mention, that all the power of intellect, position, and wealth should be brought against the idea that such laws may be improved, until England wakes up suddenly to find the measure of such reforms brought forward by those who express themselves most hostile to them, and a Land Bill hastily passed through Parliament, with clauses that they may take away from landowners the fee-simple of their land? We shall be told that these restraints are necessary owing to the temptations to young men coming early into their estates. But, as a rule, peers do not inherit before middle age; it is the exception, and many of the young ones recognise the responsibilities of property. Are we, for the sake of protecting a few—a very few—foolish men from the consequences of their own folly, to hamper the whole of the landed proprietors of England, and to make living men, anxious to improve their estates and benefit their tenants, feel the 'dead man's grip,' from which there is no escape? I have reminded you of the disturbed state of the country previous to the repeal of the Corn Laws. In 1879 comes again a time of trial, and we have distress, but not disaffection; disappointment, but not despair. Is it too much to hope that the land laws will also be calmly considered with a view to their improvement; that landlords and landowners will become the owners and lords of their land; and that by free trade in land the agricultural difficulty will be surmounted?"

This is a candid and curious comment by one of themselves upon the manner in which the affairs of the English landed gentry are conducted. The laws which regulate succession are no more worthy of study than they were when Cromwell declared them to be a "tortuous and ungodly jumble." In his day the law of strict entail prevailed, but now there is a limit to the settlement of land. But so strong is still the grip of the dead hand that any landowner can by will determine the inheritance for the lifetime of any number of persons in existence, and for twenty-one years after the death of any one, or the survivor of those persons. That is to say, the will of the dead man, who ought to have none on the living earth, may prevail over that of every survivor and for twenty-one years of the life of a person yet to be born—a foolish alteration of the Roman law, which, when a citizen was once dead, deemed him dead for all

purposes, and his heirs legal possessors. The limit of English law has undoubtedly been preserved in order that the land of England should not be free—in order that its freedom should be held in strict subordination to the sublime institution of a “landed gentry.” Land may be settled in this way for about a century, and the estates of nearly all the seven thousand persons who own fifty-two millions of acres in this country are settled upon this plan.

We will first take the case of a “new man” who has bought an estate, perhaps has added to it all the outlying farms he could purchase, and desires, as the phrase goes, to “found a family.” He has, we will suppose, a son, a minor. He has brothers, to whom, if he or his son die childless, he wishes the family foundation to belong. He instructs the family solicitor to make his will, by which he conveys the landed property to certain friends who are called trustees, for the benefit of his son; and should his son’s life fail, then to his brother; and should the brother’s life fail, to the children of his brother. If his brother die without issue, then to his next brother; and, that life failing, then to the unborn son of that brother, and so on through all the members and heirs of the elder generation, until not the poorest scrivener, paid by the word, could suggest an addition to the precautions against the estate falling out of the line of entail. These claims are thus “tailed on” one after the other, the first “estate tail” being obviously that of his son.

But, so far, the “new man” has only made a will which he can revoke or destroy at pleasure. His land is still “free;” if he is in debt, it can be sold; it is his absolutely; he can deal with it as he pleases for his own benefit, for the advantage of his tenants and his posterity. He proceeds to deprive his land of this “free” character, to make it, in aristocratic fashion, “no man’s land;” to prevent, to the utmost of his power, any one from occupying his own position as a free landowner, perhaps at the time when his son is about to be married. Then the business of founding the family is consolidated and secured. The “new man” now parts with his acres; they are made over at once to trustees; he abdicates the position of a freeholder, he accepts from their hands that of a life tenant; he has bargained with his son that he (the son) shall succeed him in the life tenancy, and that they both together shall agree to place next in the “tail” of possessors, the son who may be

born of the approaching marriage. The family is now founded, the marriage is now solemnised, and in due time, perhaps, the “new man” caresses a grandson who, in noble fashion, is born a landed gentleman. He, the baby, can by no act of his grandfather, or his father, be dispossessed of inheritance. He is the heir, and, if he survive them both, the estate must be his. After him, in the entail, come his expected brothers, his uncles, &c.; so that if he live to manhood, and it is desired to continue the “family” in his line, that entail, which was made by his grandfather and father, must be cut off, and again his (the baby’s) son must be placed next to himself in the line of possessors. But much happens on the day, or probably soon after the day, when he, whom we have called “the baby,” comes of age. With the consent of his grandfather and father, or if both are dead by his own will, he can execute a disentailing deed, and lo! the land is free again, and he is absolute possessor. The law books call his tenure thus obtained “a base fee,” but that does not matter. Yet this is not the practice of the landed gentry. Even when the estate may be free, the force of custom leads them to replace the legal fetters. As a rule, the father is alive and is enjoying the prospect of long life when his son and heir attains manhood, and it becomes necessary to guard the land, according to English custom, from lapsing into freedom. A new deed of settlement is prepared for the pen of the heir.

It has already been explained why that course is not pursued. The heir’s opportunity may not come for thirty years or more should his father live to a great age. Meanwhile he has no rights of his own, and his reversion, which no man can take from him, is, as any money-lender will remind him, entirely contingent upon his own existence. His own comfort may only be ensured by accepting a suitable allowance from his father, and re-settling the estate upon the children he himself may have. This his lawyer will remind him is sounder business than borrowing money upon his contingent reversion. It is all so far off that a son at twenty-one, with a father of forty-five, will, as a rule, sign anything to secure a comfortable income.

LONDON SHOEMAKERS AND COBBLERS.

COBBLERS are not shoemakers; as seen from a professional point of view, they are cobblers, and nothing else. By the way,

however, they are also called "snobs." Although I shall not use it in this article, snob appears to be a perfectly legitimate trade word, and inoffensive enough originally. One class of which I treat are not only called snobs by the public, but they often call themselves so. With the word, however, is indissolubly attached a ludicrous and contemptible idea. Not only with Thackeray, who set the fashion to a great extent by his *Book of Snobs*, and by much of his earlier writings, but with nearly everyone else the word snob has come to stand for an ignorant, impudent, and offensive man. But the class themselves, although perfectly aware of the signification—so perfectly aware that they will frequently speak disrespectfully of any one in a private capacity by calling him a snob, yet attach no such meaning to the epithet in their professional life, but will speak calmly enough of themselves, or of their intimate friends, as being "snobs."

A journeyman shoemaker, when skilful and steady, commands a premium in respect of those qualities which is not always obtainable by members of other trades. A few of such men—shoemakers, not cobblers, being now meant—have the sagacity to live a mile or two out of town, usually within easy reach of Clapham Junction; and running up frequently to Waterloo, or other suitable station, are not only supplied with work for themselves by the shop to which they are attached, but as their families grow up they are kept employed also, and this all the year round. Sometimes, too, the wife will keep a sewing-machine, and employ one or two girls as her assistants; there are several such families, whose earnings do not amount to less than six or seven pounds per week. These are, of course, the élite of the trade. Not every man has the skill, and very few the opportunity to make so much money, yet many might do something like it who do nothing of the kind.

The best-paid workmen, judged by the total sums they earn, are nowadays "finishers" after machines in large shops or factories. They take the boots home by the dozen after they have been cut out, riveted, or stitched by the machine, and then, assisted by boys at home, they are enabled to earn very large wages indeed. A great deal of credit is due to those among the shoemakers who resist the temptations of London life, who can leave them after

having once been familiar with them, and can find pleasure in the dulness and quiet of what is to them a country residence.

In speaking of the good sense of those who resist the temptations of London, it is wonderful what a charm—I might rather say what charm—they can see in an "East End" life. The neighbourhoods of Whitechapel, Shoreditch, and Bethnal Green are largely inhabited by these men, who are amongst the most regular attendants at the public-houses and beer-shops where bird and canine "fancy" predominates, and where used to be got up matches between dogs, minor pedestrians, and pugilists. Pedestrianism is at a discount, pugilism has vanished—facts which our tradesmen deplore, as in times past some of the fleetest and "gamest" issued from their ranks. The choking atmosphere of a tap-room would not seem very inviting to most of my readers, but we must remember that there is a great temptation for a man to spend his evenings at any place where company and conversation can be met with, away from the one room which is too often his workshop, dining-room, and bedroom, especially when his work has been done while sitting on a stool little more than half the height from the ground of the seat of an ordinary chair—work, too, which bows the head and sorely tries the eyes.

There is, therefore, much excuse for the shoemaker's Saint Monday, and for his lounging at the public-house, if we admit his one room as a necessity. Unhappily, it is too often a necessity of his own creation. Many classes, earning little or no more than the shoemaker, would scorn to live in this confined and squalid way, and as a natural result acquire an air of tidiness and respectability which these men generally lack. As just said, however, they seem positively attached to the crowded and miserable alleys of the East End. I am acquainted with several instances where a man, known to be a good workman, has been offered higher wages at the West End—where men are often paid fifty per cent. more than at the East—with constant work ensured all the year round, and the man has refused the offer. There is, we may suppose, a charm in the companionship of so many of the trade. To them there are no haunts like the old haunts, and so it is difficult to detach the shoemaker from his accustomed neighbourhood.

A man who is a cobbler is often one who has been a very expert shoemaker, but he is much oftener one who has never been expert. When a workman finds that he can no longer make so fast as the new generation, or seize with their readiness upon each improvement, he often takes to the repairing, and were it not that he is generally too far fallen into the sere and yellow leaf, such a man would be very valuable to his employers. From his past experience and skill he knows exactly what can be done to boots and shoes, and how to do it, and does not spoil the article in putting it together after he has partially pulled it to pieces, whereas less skilful hands often injure the shape.

It is not easy to state what the average earnings of the cobblers may be, the pay varies so much in different localities, and so much depends upon the amount of leisure the man deems it necessary to allow himself during the week. In a respectable neighbourhood the repairer who gets plenty of work on his own account, and will keep at it, can earn a very fair income, while the man who works for the shops will earn, if he choose, from thirty-five to forty shillings per week. It is true that very few do earn this, but the fault is mainly with themselves.

I have said that a cobbler is often a man who has been a skilled workman, but that he is also often one quite the reverse. Indeed, the majority of them have never been craftsmen at all; they are men who have been brought up by their fathers to work at the stool as soon as they were old enough to do anything; they have learned to mend, but never to make, and are cobblers, therefore, pure and simple. Some, too, are the unfortunate parish apprentices, the bonus of five pounds with whom was enough to tempt some "little" man to take them; a man who either could not or would not teach them much, or who, caring chiefly to get some profit out of their labour, set them at once to the commonest and easiest work, and kept them at it. Of course the lazy and irregular habits which seem to be indigenous to the tribe flourish especially in these poor fellows; some, however, of the more provident among them—save the mark!—take the precaution of enrolling themselves in the militia. It is hardly too much to say that a larger percentage of working shoemakers of all descriptions are found in the ranks of the militia than is furnished by any other

tread. Not all cobblers, however, are irregular and lazy; some men will work all their lives for one shop, and their sons will follow them. I have even known three generations working at the same time for one firm.

The number of cobblers is diminishing; there is no doubt about the fact; and so are those of shoemakers generally. I fear that among other things which the much-tried householder will have to face, will be a continual tendency to increased dearness of boots and shoes, arising from scarcity of labour. For this there is a very simple explanation, the sewing-machine being at the bottom of it. This has made a great change in the trade, few boots or shoes, in comparison, being now made entirely by hand. The change has, perhaps, hardly been so great as was expected, so much being still required in the way of finishing; it has, nevertheless, been serious, and the shoemaker or cobbler who, thirty years ago, would to a certainty have set his boy to work on the stool as early as possible, now argues, shrewdly enough, that the machine has reduced the hand-work, and is likely to reduce it still more, therefore there is no future, no perspective for his sons in his own trade; hence he makes them try something else. As this argument went on simultaneously in a thousand cordwaining families, and as, from some inexplicable cause, shoemakers always have a great many children, its effect on the trade very soon began to be felt. The same reasoning has been employed in many a lawyer's family of late, as the future of conveyancing is supposed to be hardly so roseate as it was of yore.

The sewing-machine, from its wonderful speed, and consequent cheapness, will always be in demand; but there is no doubt whatever that a pair of boots made by hand much surpasses in comfort and durability a pair made by the machine. The machine has produced another effect on the trade, and this a more complete and sweeping one. It has almost totally annihilated the shoe-binder. Five-and-thirty years ago, as many of my readers must know, pretty nearly every poor woman was a shoe-binder; and now there are no binders. This is a literal truth, or very close to one, for the proprietor of one of the largest private shops in his district—that is, a shop which does not supply the trade—informed me, a few years back, that whereas when he started in business he

used to employ binders by the score, he now did not employ one; and moreover, that if, by any chance, he should need such a person, he really did not know where to look for her. The machine supplies the place of these women, and now employs, in arranging and fitting the work for it, many who would, some years ago, without question have been binders. Not so many are required, but those who are employed get better paid.

Cobbling cannot be an absolutely unhealthy calling, because we see so many old cobblers, and these very often are merry enough old fellows, yet if a man have a tendency to consumption, the cramped position on the seat soon confirms it. Few persons give a thought to the uncomfortable, almost painful, nature of a shoemaker's work, but let any moderately tall man, unused to it, sit for a few hours on the low stool, and he will have more sympathy with its occupant in future, and will cease to wonder at the everlasting short pipe.

The repairers, or to keep to my descriptive name, cobblers, differ from the shoemakers, and from most other callings, in having no trades union. How this comes to be I do not know, but while the shoemaker proper is generally bound to obey the behests of a committee, and work for, or not work for, a master, as it directs, the independent cobbler does as he pleases. This is not the place to enter upon the pros and cons of trades unionism, as to which, no doubt, as with everything else in our social system, much may be said for and against. But when speaking on a subject which fairly leads up to it, I may state, as having fallen within my own observation, that in one instance at least it has done harm.

Persons unacquainted with this particular trade would be surprised to learn the minute and intolerable interference which sometimes goes on between the master and the man. The operatives decided as a body, some years ago, upon an advance of wages; a certain large retail employer of labour was in consequence duly advised that he must give his people more money—not one of these latter, by the way, had ever asked for an advance, although, we may be sure, they were willing enough to receive it. After some faint resistance the employer yielded, seeing that the system was too well organised for him to hope to struggle successfully against it just then, but he inwardly resolved to take

on in future only non-unionists. In the fashionable suburbs of London, however, this is easier said than done; he made the whole of his stock, no ready-made goods ever entered his doors, and for a man who does this it is not easy to change his staff; he must employ the men who live near him or none. So he grumbled, and went on, and as he was known to be a very liberal and kindly master, he had but little trouble with his men, unionists or non-unionists; until one day a shabby-looking stranger, of the same genus as one that had called on him to announce the advance, came to warn him that he was behaving scandalously to his work-people, and that, unless he altered his proceedings, his shop would be "struck" and "picketed." Astounded at this, he asked an explanation, and found that the head and front of his offending was that he was issuing for a certain description of ladies' boot a lining which commonly went with a somewhat higher-priced article; and although no extra trouble whatever was incurred by the worker, yet as more money was paid to the makers of the particular class of boot to which this more costly lining usually pertained, he must pay as if for making the more expensive boot, or resort to the old lining! The master urged that if he chose to give his customers a better article for the same money, he had a perfect right to do so; and as it took no longer to sew in the one lining than the other, it did not matter to his work-people. But the oracle had spoken. "Them linings had never been sold but with high-priced boots; and if he did not at once 'drop it,' not a man should [not would, but should] work for him." Several of his people voluntarily told him they were sorry he should have been interfered with, and that they did not care what lining he used; but it was of no avail. The committee triumphed, and the master bought afterwards a large proportion of ready-made goods, and thirty or forty men and women had to find new employment.

Shoemakers are generally reckoned a quick and shrewd, although a rather narrow-minded race: and I think this estimate a tolerably correct one. An instance of sharpness occurs to me which does not redound very much to the credit of the craft—it is to be observed that they usually speak of themselves as the craft, or as craftsmen. It is briefly this. A house in Whitechapel did a large trade in

exporting ready-made boots and shoes, chiefly to the West Indies, and, of course, employed a great number of hands. A man would receive the materials for half-a-dozen pairs, and would bring them back made up, one heel tucked into the front of the other boot—they were all bluchers—and squeezed tightly down, as some of my readers must have seen them. The men noticed that when the foreman took them in he merely counted the pairs, and then, just glancing at the lower boot to see that the work looked all right, threw them into a corner of the warehouse, from whence they were taken and packed into hogsheds, or chests, and sent off. Probably some one among the workers sharper than his fellows first caught the idea, and communicated it to the rest. But, be that as it may, it is very certain that the whole of one consignment of boots, when arrived at Jamaica, were found to be deficient in each pair of one heel, and half of one sole. The rascals knew that of the boot which was tucked into its fellow, only a portion of the sole could be seen, the remainder they never worked on at all, and so the consignment was worthless.

As with most trades, both shoemakers and cobblers dislike "new-fangled things," even when they are less portentous than the sewing-machine, and, consequently, a great many of them refused to work the gutta-percha soles, when they were so popular; here, again, the few shrewder ones saw their opportunity, and applying themselves specially to the labour, made a very good thing by doing so. Gutta-percha, however, fell off in quality, and it was, and is, rare to get a pair of soles of the toughness which at first characterised them, so that the repairers are now seldom called upon to work up the obnoxious material. Pegged and riveted boots are now their abhorrence: "What with the smell and one thing or the other of gutta-percha, a fellow might as well be a painter; and with these new ways of pegging boots, a fellow might as well be a carpenter; in fact, as shoe-making now is, there is no knowing where you are." This is a cordwainer's view of the changes in cordwaining.

It would be too much to expect of men very imperfectly educated, as cobblers are, and with so little to elevate them in the circumstances by which they are surrounded—that they themselves are to a great extent responsible for these circumstances has nothing to do with the question, which is simply one of fact—it would be folly to

expect a very high standard of practical or conversational morality. Forty years ago, the working cobblers, and shoemakers too, of London might have been described as amongst the lowest of its denizens. Their language was foul to a degree, and their habits were almost in keeping; but a change has taken, and is taking, place. As regards their professional progress, the influx of French and German shoemakers has put the regular craftsman very much on his mettle, and they, as with other English artisans, find that to keep the cream of the work to themselves, more brain and ingenuity must be called into play, and this, with other influences, has extended downwards. Then education has become so cheap and so common, that even the cobbler cannot bear that his children shall have none at all—apart from all compulsion—when every child around is learning something; and so each addition to the ranks brings a worker far better educated, poorly though that may be, than would have been deemed in keeping with his calling forty years ago. At the west end of London this change is very visible, and even in the slums of Whitechapel an alteration for the better has set in; and now that decent lodgings and more wholesome workshops are becoming the rule, the progress will be very rapid. At any rate, we must admit that these men ought not to be very low in the social scale, when we remember their usefulness, their sharpness, and the liberal wages they can, and often do earn.

SET IN A SILVER SEA.

BY B. L. FARJEON.

CHAPTER XIX. RANF DEDICATES HIS DIARY TO EVANGELINE.

"I ADDRESS these concluding lines to you, Evangeline, child of my heart.

"Thus far have I related all that is necessary of my life beyond these silver seas, and all that I knew of yours. One day it may be of importance to you to be acquainted with the particulars, for, as Harold truly observed, 'Life is full of surprises.'

"Something yet remains to be told. Harold, I learned, was a sculptor, and was poor. Mauvain was at once his friend and patron. Harold might have achieved distinction, had he cared to win it, but his indolent nature stopped the way. Whatever may have been Mauvain's true feeling

for Harold, I became convinced that Harold estimated his patron's character at its proper worth. Had I cared to speak in terms of disparagement of his wealthier patron he would have resented it; none the less did he hold him in despal.

"I have taken some pains to delineate the characters of these gentlemen; I wish you to understand them.

"I read Mauvain's last letter to me over and over again. It was extraordinary that he should choose for you a name you already bore. He could not have been aware that beneath his name and mine in the Bible I had found in my mother's hut was written the name of Evangeline, which I naturally supposed to be yours. Was, then, the circumstance of his desiring me to introduce you to the inhabitants of the Silver Isle by that name merely a coincidence, or was it part of a chain yet to be unwound?

"I determined to sound Harold upon the point. Between the young sculptor and myself no feeling of confidence existed. He looked upon me as a creature so immeasurably beneath him, and was so painstaking, in his insolent way, of impressing it upon me, that a man with less control over himself than I possess would not have tamely submitted to it. But I have learned life's lessons, and only upon rare occasions do my passions succeed in overpowering my reason.

"Harold evinced a desire to amuse himself with me, but it was not in my nature to truckle to any man, and I was as free with my words as he of his; so after a time we came to a tacit understanding to have little to say to each other.

"For a long time I could not find a suitable opportunity to speak to him on the subject of Mauvain's letter, and it was not until we were within a few days' sail of the Silver Isle that it presented itself. We had not addressed each other for days; he was master of the situation, for he never betrayed the slightest impatience towards me. It was different with me; when I am stung by a nettle I cannot help showing feeling.

"I must be just to him. He took a sentimental pleasure in your society, but I do not believe he ever uttered a word against me in your presence. This was so loyal that I could not help admiring him for it; few men would have refrained from stabbing one whom they disliked as cordially as he disliked me. At other times, when you were not near, he did not spare me.

"He was lying on the deck with a book

of poetry in his hand, which he was idly reading, when I approached and stood before him. He did not raise his eyes, but, with matchless insolence, murmured, as though he had just come to the line:

"And men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders! The quotation is pat, for one stands before me. Thrust for thrust, hunchback; I am ready."

"I am above those taunts," I said; "they no longer wound me."

"I lied when I made that boast, and he knew that I lied.

"At least you have courage," he remarked.

"I need it," I replied. "But it is not of myself I care to speak. I wish to have a word with you about that little maid."

"Evangeline?"

"Yes."

"It is cruel of you. This is the dreaming time of day." (The sun was shining full upon him.) "The effort of thinking, much less of speaking, is exhausting."

"It is almost a pity that the trouble of living should have been thrust upon you."

"He laughed quietly. 'I thought you would not be able to resist. It is, indeed, a pity. We should be consulted—it is an injustice.'

"There is an easy way out of it," I said, glancing at the calm and beautiful sea.

"He looked at the water with peaceful eyes, and said, 'No, hunchback. I will wait. Proceed with your business.'

"We are near the end of our voyage."

"I am happy in the reflection that we shall soon part company."

"On the day I first set foot on this vessel you gave me a letter from Mauvain."

"Did I? Ah, yes; I remember."

"In that letter he desired me to call my little maid by the name of Evangeline. Are you acquainted with his reason for doing so?"

"He did not reply immediately, but sat looking out in silence upon the sea. Presently he brushed his hand across his eyes, and murmured:

"Visions! Have you Mauvain's letter about you?"

"Yes."

"Will you let me read it?"

"I gave it to him, and he read it aloud, repeating the opening words, 'I know not what name you have given your child.' Then he returned the letter to me, and

said: 'In the isle for which we are bound there was once a maiden named Evangeline, whom the islanders hold in tender remembrance. Mauvain has told me the story. That may have been his reason.'

"I thank you. It is a sufficient reason."

"I was about to leave him when he called to me to stay."

"It is my turn now," he said. "When you take up your residence on this wonderful isle—which might almost be supposed to be one of Mauvain's fanciful creations—it will not be of advantage to Evangeline that she shall be supposed to be your child. Even if I admit, for the sake of argument, that she is yours, which I do not believe"—(he paused here, and looked at me steadily for a moment or two in silence)—"which I do not believe," he repeated languidly, "it will be best to represent Evangeline as an orphan. You have your secrets, hunchback, I do not doubt, and I do not seek to penetrate them. A man's mind is like a prison-house; there are cells in it whose doors we keep tightly sealed until some momentous event forces them open, and lets in the light we dread. You will understand me, although I speak in enigmas. Do not trouble yourself to ask me another question, for I should not answer it. Rest content in this knowledge; leaving you and Evangeline on the Silver Isle, I shall return to Mauvain, with no definite idea of ever meeting you or your little maid again. But it may happen. I hold to the belief that man is not a responsible being—responsible neither for villainy nor virtue. If it is in me to be virtuous, I must be so, will I nill I—no credit to me for it. If it is in me to be a knave, a knave I must be, will I nill I—no blame to me for it. The question of responsibility is one that is either ridiculously misunderstood or wilfully ignored—the latter most likely, because of its awkwardness. We do not create or form our own emotions, passions, feelings. I am born with a jealous nature; I love a woman passionately; another man steps between us, and makes me suffer. The woman, a coquette, as all women are naturally, plays with both of us with exquisite delicacy and finesse, and one hour I am in heaven, the next in hell. In a moment of fury, opportunity serving, I kill my rival. I am really not accountable, and if you choose to call it murder and punish me for it, you are punishing me for having been born with certain moral forces

which direct and control every action of my being. What is, is. No man knows what is before him; and although I shall part from you and our little maid with no definite idea of ever meeting you again, it may happen, as I have said, that our lines of life may strangely cross in the future. I really believe, hunchback, that this is the longest speech I ever made. Pardon me for it, I beg; I will not offend again."

"With that he closed his eyes, and appeared to sleep; and during the remainder of our voyage, all that passed between us was expressive of a desire to see as little of each other as possible. Whatever may have been his motive in speaking to me as he did, I recognised that he was right with respect to you. Were it supposed that you were my child, it would be a distinct disadvantage to you. Therefore, when the islanders asked me if you were an orphan, I told them to accept you as such. As such you are regarded; and as far as I know you are one."

"So for the night I bring my labour to an end, and lay aside my pen. Leontine is asleep; my white doves are at rest. And in the valley below, you, my fair dove, Evangeline, are also at rest. Good-night. I sleep, dreaming of you."

CHAPTER XX. RANF'S DIARY CONTINUED.

"UNEXPECTEDLY to myself, I continue my diary."

"The night has passed, and the day. I am able to move more freely, and to-morrow I hope to make my way slowly to my hut below, to look after my goats, and dogs, and birds. In a little while I shall be quite well."

"The night has been a strange one, and may lead to important results."

"Whether it was that the recalling of certain incidents caused me to dwell upon details which had not made much impression upon me, or because I was in a state of nervousness produced by my narrow escape when endeavouring to pluck the flower on the mountain's top, I cannot say; but contrary to my usual habit, I could not sleep for longer than a few minutes, or perhaps moments, at a time. All through the night I was in a condition of wakefulness: now dozing, with a hundred confused pictures in my mind, now awake and striving to pierce the darkness, which seemed to be thronged with moving figures. Now and then the confused tangle of pictures and faces assumed some kind of order from which a distinct impression

could be gained, and of these the most distinct was the recurrence of two faces—the face of Margaret Sylvester and that of the lady who had sought the shelter of my hut the night before Mauvain visited me. At first I saw no meaning in this conjunction, but gradually it dawned upon me that there was a likeness between these two faces, although one was fair and the other dark, and I beguiled myself into studying the shadowy presentments. The longer I dwelt upon them the stronger grew the likeness, until I began to believe that there was really a meaning in the resemblance. I determined not to let the matter slip, but to make some quiet inquiry into it. Margaret Sylvester has already told me that she is not a native of the Silver Isle, and from the few chance words that have reached me with reference to her I have learnt that she and her husband and her husband's father led for some years a life of adventure in places not unfamiliar to me. I have already described in these pages that the lady to whom I had given shelter appeared to me to be friendless; and at one time in the night I was startled by the memory of her expression of grief when she was lamenting that father, sister, child had been torn from her.

"It would be difficult for me to explain here why I determined to probe this matter; sufficient to say that in some undefinable way the lady to whom I had given shelter, Harold, Mauvain, and Evangeline appear to be connected by invisible links—and now this likeness between the lady and Margaret Sylvester adds another to the chain. It is because this chain of circumstance surrounds Evangeline, whose future happiness is my only care in life, that I am anxious to arrive at some understanding of it.

"Accident has already placed me in possession of a wonderful piece of evidence, and that is why, after I had finished my recital of those events affecting Evangeline, which I deemed it proper she should be made acquainted with when she is a woman, I continue the recital with the words 'Unexpectedly to myself I continue my diary.' It will be as well for me at once to resolve to note down in this way anything of importance that occurs, so that the story may be complete as far as lies in my power. Then I can place the record in Evangeline's hands, and say, 'All that is here written relates to you and myself.'

"The dreams which haunted me in the

night would not have been in themselves sufficient to warrant me to resume my pen; but what occurred this evening determined me.

"Prosaic people who believe in nothing but what they see and touch might, if they had the opportunity, ask, 'What can occur to a man living alone in a hut on a deserted range thousands of feet above the level of the sea?' It would be waste of breath to answer them. Men may live for the hour, but they live not only in the hour. What is done leaves its mark. We can bury bodies, but we cannot bury ghosts.

"The door of my hut was open; the balmy air floated in; the evening was calm and peaceful. The white dove that rapped at my door last night has flown backwards and forwards, from hut to hut, all the day. An hour ago it flew in, panting, and dashing its wings against the wall, fell to the ground in an agony of fear. After it flew a wild hawk, one of a brood I thought I had destroyed. An eye for an eye with these destroyers of my innocent birds; I will drive them from the mountain. As the hawk swooped down upon my dove, Leontine leapt upon it, seized it, and carried it, mangled and bloody, from the hut. I picked up my dove and held it close to me, its fluttering heart beating against my own. Presently I released it, and the bird flew into the dove-cote. Then I noticed that a shelf in the hut had been thrown down by Leontine; the articles it held were strewn upon the ground. I picked them up, and among them was the Bible, with silver clasps, in which Mauvain's name and mine and Evangeline's were written by my mother. The clasp had been loosened and the leaves disordered by the shock. I sat at my table with the intention of arranging the leaves and fixing the clasps.

"I have mentioned that when I first found the Bible in my mother's hut, I noticed that some of the leaves stuck together, as I supposed from damp. My idea was not correct; the leaves had been purposely gummed together, and I now discovered that this had been done for the purpose of concealing sheets of thin paper covered with small fine writing. This must have escaped my mother's notice, and might never have been discovered by me but for the murderous flight of the hawk after my innocent white dove.

"What was I about to discover?

"I carefully examined every page of the Bible, and succeeded in extracting ten of

these sheets covered on both sides with fine writing. It was not difficult to judge that the writer had written in secrecy, and at intervals of time, for there were occasionally sudden breaks in the manuscript, as though she had been interrupted suddenly and unexpectedly, and was fearful of being discovered. I transcribe here what I read in those pages so strangely discovered.

* * * * *

"I can endure this suspense no longer; it is fourteen days since I saw Marguerite. How often have I counted them, day after day! How often have I counted the hours which make up each day! To-morrow she will come, I am told, and I wait and wait, and watch the clock, and to-morrow comes, but does not bring Marguerite. Again I am told Marguerite will come to-morrow, and again I wait and watch and count the minutes, and bless the sunlight that brings to-morrow, and run to the door a hundred times, thinking I hear Marguerite's footsteps—only to be disappointed. Why does she keep away from me? I loved her always—she is sister, mother, all in the world to me! Why does she not come? Oh, why does she not come? I am so afraid of not being able to remember all that passes that I think to myself I will write it down, and then Marguerite can read it, and as she reads I can interrupt her and tell her things I have forgotten. And she will kiss me and hold me in her arms, and I shall be happy once more. If she would come now, this minute, calling outside, 'Clarice! Clarice!' Hark! Do I really hear her? No, it is fancy.

"I do not want any person to see this but Marguerite, and if she were here this minute I would tear it up, as I have torn up letters written to her which were never sent. What was the use of writing letters when Marguerite was coming? But she does not come, and I am in despair. What has happened to her? Is she dead? And our cruel master—where is he? Ah, I

hope not with Marguerite, tormenting her, torturing her, as he has done to both of us since our dear father's death. Father! why did you deliver us over to this hard man, whose only aim has been to make us wretched? But you did not know—no, you could not have known!

* * * * *

"Another week has gone by, and I have not seen Marguerite. I get no opportunity to write. Again and again have I commenced, and been interrupted. What am I writing? I am asked. Nothing I reply; and then the gentleman who begs me call him Harold asks to look at the paper, and I tear it into a thousand pieces and will not let him see. Child, he says with a smile, you have no need to tear it up; if you gave me an open letter, telling me to keep it for a year and not look at it, I should obey you. I do not believe him? Why? No one could treat me with greater respect. He speaks to me as if I were a princess. But I am not a princess. I am only a poor dancing-girl, and I want my sister Marguerite! I am obliged to keep my writing secret. Not because of this gentleman or his friends, but because of the woman who attends me, and who watches me, as I have discovered, when she supposes I am not on my guard. What have you there, my dear? she asks. I tell her an old letter, and she nods and smiles. Are people who are always smiling when you are in trouble deceitful? This woman is, I know, for I have detected her searching my clothes in the middle of the night, when she believed I was asleep. This makes me all the more anxious to write and keep it from her. I have gone to sleep with the paper in my hand tight, and in the morning, when I woke, I have not been able to read a word. So I have discovered a way. My dear old Testament, with the silver clasps, that my beloved father gave me; I will write what I care to write and conceal it between the pages. She will never find it there.

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"SWEET NELLY, MY HEART'S DELIGHT."

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"SWEET NELLY, MY HEART'S DELIGHT."

CHAPTER I. IN SACKCLOTH AND SLAVERY.

In a trackless country, through a forest stretching away for hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of miles—for no traveller has ever yet crossed the great continent of America and measured its breadth—there journeyed, slowly and with pain, a woman who sometimes carried and sometimes led a little girl four years old. The woman wore no hat nor hood, and her clothes were torn to shreds and tatters by the thorny briars through which she had made her way. Her eyes were wild, and her face, save when she looked at the little child, was set stern: her lips moved as she went along, showing that she was engaged in some internal struggle. The forest since she first plunged into it had changed its aspect. Everywhere now were pines, nothing but pines, growing in clumps, or in belts, or in great masses, in place of the oaks, maples, hemlocks, and birches through which she had passed. There were no longer any wild vines; the air was resinous to the smell; the ground was soft and yielding. In some places the fugitive drew back her foot in dismay, because the soil sank beneath her weight.

The sun was making rapid way down to the west; the shadows were long; the child dragged its steps, and presently began to burst into a little crying; the woman soothed her. Presently the little

cry became a great sobbing. "Nelly is hungry," she sobbed.

Then the woman sat down on a fallen trunk, and looking round her, wrung her hands in despair, for she was quite lost; she knew not where to go, and she had no food.

"I thought to find revenge," she cried, "and I have found death and murder. Heaven is just. I shall sit and watch the little one starve to death—the child will go first—and then I shall die. Oh! wretched woman, why wast thou born? Child, child"—she burst into tears of despair, and clutched the little one to her heart—"curse me with your dying breath. Oh! my little innocent, my lamb, I have murdered thee, for I have no food, no water. Hush! hush! Try to sleep."

She soothed and rocked the little one, who presently, weary with the long day's march, dropped asleep, hungry as she was.

Then the sun sank lower: a little more and he would have disappeared altogether, and the woman would have been left alone for the night with the starving child: but while the red colour was beginning to spread in the west, she saw, emerging from a clump of pines before her, an old man.

He was a white man, but his skin was now dark with exposure to the sun and air; he was clad in skins; he was very old; his hair and beard were long and white; he leaned upon a stick as he went;

his steps were feeble; his eyes wandered up and down the glades of the forest as if he were afraid of being watched. Presently he saw the woman and the child, and after a moment's hesitation, he made his way, in a curious and zigzag fashion, across the green space which lay between himself and the woman, and accosted her.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"A runaway," she replied.

"Show me your hand."

She held out her left hand; he held out his; on both was the same mark—the brand of a convict.

"I am a thief," she said; "I was rightly punished."

"I am an Anabaptist," he replied.

"I was punished by the law of the land. Who is the child?"

"I stole the child. It is my master's. I stole it for revenge because they were going to flog me. I have brought it all the way. My food is exhausted, and so she will die. And now," she added, with a despairing cry, "I am a murderess as well as a thief and the companion of thieves, and there can be no more hope for me in this world or the next."

The old man shook his head, and looked at the child still asleep.

"Come with me," he said; "the little one shall not die. I have a hut and there is food. Both hut and food are poor and rough."

He led her with the greatest care across the treacherous quagmire by steps of which he alone knew the secret. "Here I am quite safe," he explained, "because no one except myself can cross the place. Safe, so long as I am in hiding. This place is an island of firm land in the midst of a bog."

There was a hut standing beneath pines which grew on ground a little elevated. It was furnished with a few skins, and an earthenware pot of the rudest kind. There was, besides, another earthenware vessel containing water. In the pot was meal. The old man mixed the water with the meal.

"When the child wakes," he said, "give her some, and take some yourself at once. Now sleep in hope: to-morrow I return."

"Oh! do not leave us alone," said the woman.

"You are quite safe. I go to fetch more meal; there are some friendly blacks who will provide me. Sleep in peace."

Then he disappeared, and the woman, laying the child upon one of the skins

and covering it with the other, sat beside her wondering, and presently fell fast asleep. In the morning when she awoke the sun was already up, and her host was standing in the doorway. Then the child awoke too, and presently sat up and ate her breakfast with a hearty good will. The old man leaning upon his stick thereupon began a very serious and solemn discourse. He told the woman what a wicked thing she had done in carrying away a helpless child to the great Dismal Swamp, a place inhabited by none but runaways, and those scattered about, difficult to find, and poorly provided. "Here," he said, "the whites who have exchanged slavery for this most wretched freedom live separately, each by himself; they are jealous of one another, they suspect each his brother; and the blacks, who live together in communities, change their quarters continually for fear of being caught by the planters, who come out with guns and dogs to hunt them down. I have had to lie hidden here without fire or food for days, while the hounds followed my track until the morass threatened to swallow them up. You, who might have courted such a life for yourself, did you think what it meant for a child?"

The woman shook her head.

"I have been here twenty years and more. I have lost the count of time; I know only the seasons as they follow. I think that I am over seventy, and when I can no longer beg meal of my friends, I must lie down to starve. I have spoken to no white person except to you during all this time. When I came I had a Bible. That was lost one night of storm. Since then I have had nothing but my meditations and my hopes; and you—what would you have had? The continual memory of a murdered child."

"What shall I do? what shall I do?" she cried.

"Take back the child; whatever happen afterwards, take back the child."

The little girl looked up in the woman's face, and laughed and clapped her hands.

"I have sinned," said the woman. "Let me take her back. God forgive me! She shall go home to her mother."

She rose at once as if there was not a moment to be lost. The old Anabaptist put up some meal in a bag of skin, and led her again over the treacherous path.

"You have lost your way," he said. "I will be your guide."

He led her by paths known to himself,

across forty miles and more of thick forest. When they came near any cleared land, they rested by day and travelled by night. After four days of travelling they came to their destination.

The old man took the child in his arms and solemnly blessed her in all her doings. Then he prayed with the woman for a while, and then, grasping his stick, he disappeared in the forest.

The woman, left alone, began to tremble. Before her were the broad fields of tobacco belonging to the plantation. On the fields she saw the gangs of men and women at work; the overseers going about among them armed with their heavy whips. Some of the labourers were white, like herself; some were black. Far away, beyond the fields, she saw the house. It was afternoon. She retreated to the forest and sat down, thinking. Finally, she resolved to delay her return until the day's work was done and the gangs had left the fields.

It was past seven o'clock and already dark when she came to the house. She told the little one to be very quiet. There was no one in the portico; but there were lights in the state room. The woman opened the door and set the little one down.

"Run to your mother, child," she whispered.

A pattering of little feet, and a wild cry as the mother snatched up her lost babe, and then the woman, leaning against the door, sighed heavily and sank to the ground. They found her there—those who came running at the cry of the mother—and brought her within the room.

"It is the woman Alice Purview," said the master.

"Leave her to me, husband," said his wife. "If she carried away the child, she hath brought her back again. Let me deal with her."

Madam dealt very gently with her. Her past offence, whatever that was, received pardon; her wounded and torn feet were bandaged and cared for; her broken spirit was soothed. When she recovered she was taken from her former office of nurse to the sick ward, and made nurse to the little girl; and, as the sequel will show, no girl ever had nurse more faithful, loving, and true.

The woman was my nurse; I was the little girl; that journey to the Dismal Swamp is the first thing I can recollect;

and when I read of Elijah, I think of the poor runaway Anabaptist, whose face, I am sure, was like unto the face of the prophet.

It was my fortune to be born in His Majesty's Plantations of Virginia. I am persuaded that there is not anywhere upon this earth a country more abundantly supplied than this with all that God hath provided for the satisfaction and delight of man. It is not for me, a simple woman, to undertake the praise of this happy colony, which has been already fitly set forth by those ingenious gentlemen whose business or pleasure it is to recommend the place for the enterprise of gentlemen adventurers, planters, and those whose hearts are valiant though their fortunes be desperate. Yet, when I contemplate the hard and cruel lives led by so many poor people in the great city of London, I am moved to wonder that His Majesty the King, who with his council is ever considering the happiness of his subjects, doth not order the way to be made plain and easy for all who are in poverty to reach this happy land. Who, for instance, in the hope of a few pence, earned with trouble and sometimes with kicks and blows, would cry up and down the street dry faggots, small coal, matches, Spanish blacking, pen and ink, thread, laces, and the like, when he might with little toil maintain himself in comfort on a farm which he could get for nothing? There is room for all on the banks of the Potomac, the Rappahannock, and the James Rivers. Yet the crowd of the city grows daily greater, and the forests of Virginia remain uncleared. Or when learned men demonstrate that, at the present rate of increase, our own population long before the end of this eighteenth century will be so vast that there will not be enough food for all, and thousands, nay, millions, will yearly perish of starvation, I am constrained to think of those broad tracts which are ready to receive thousands upon thousands of Englishmen. Sure I am, that if those at home knew the richness and fertility of the American colonies, every newly-born English child would be regarded as a fresh proof of Heaven's benevolence to this country, and another soldier in the cause of liberty and the Protestant faith.

I was born in the year one thousand seven hundred on my father's great Virginian estate. It stretched for six miles and more along the banks of a little river, called Cypress Creek, which runs through the Isle

of Wight County into the James River. My father, Robert Carellis, Esquire, was a Virginian gentleman of old stock, being a grandson of one John Carellis who came to the Province in the ship which brought the first company of Gentlemen Adventurers. There were, alas! too many gentlemen on board that vessel, there being fifty of that rank to a poor three of labouring men. They were too proud to dig, being all armigeri and esquires, although younger sons. Some of them in consequence proudly perished of starvation; some fell fighting the Indians; a few, however, of whom John Carellis was one, survived the first disasters of the colony, and became lords of vast territories covered with forest in a corner of which they began to plant tobacco. It has been said of the Virginian gentlemen that they would all be kaisers, and obey none. In sooth, they are all kaisers, inasmuch as they live each on his own estate—the lord and seigneur whose will none questions; the owner and absolute master of slaves whom they reckon by hundreds. When I read the narratives of those unfortunate men who have served in captivity to Turk or Moor, I think of our slaves in the plantations; and the life of the Turkish bashaw, in my mind, greatly resembles that of his honour, Robert Carellis, save that my father was ever a merciful man and inclined to spare the lash.

Those who worked for us were, of course, all slaves. They were of many kinds, white, black, and copper-coloured. They were English, Irish, Scotch, French, Africans—men of every country. First, as regards the negroes. There are some, I know, who doubt the righteousness of this trade in men. Yet, it cannot be denied that it must be a laudable thing to bring these poor creatures from a land where they live in constant danger of life, to one where they are maintained in security; and from the most brutish ignorance of religion to a knowledge of the Christian faith. I am aware that the Reverend Matthew Marling, Master of Arts, our late learned rector, held that it is uncertain, the Church not having pronounced upon the matter, whether black negroes, children of Ham and under his curse, have souls to be saved or lost. Yet, I have seen so many proofs of intelligence, fidelity, and affection among them, that I would fain believe them to be in all respects, save for their colour, which for this life dooms them to a condition of slavery, like unto ourselves.

Side by side with the negroes worked in our fields the white slaves, sent over to the plantations from the London and Bristol gaols—the forgers, thieves, foot-pads, shoplifters, highway robbers, passers of counterfeit coin, vagabonds, and common rogues, who had, by their ill-doing at home, forfeited their lives to the law and lain in prison under sentence of death. They had been respited by the King's mercy, some of them even rescued at the very last moment, when the noose that was to kill them was already hanging from the fatal beam, and the bitterness of death was already tasted, and the dismal funeral service had been already commenced by the ordinary. The Royal clemency gave these fortunate wretches a reprieve, but they were pardoned only on condition of being sold for a term of years to work on the plantations of Virginia, whither they were conveyed after being branded in the hand, and sold on their arrival by public auction to the highest bidder.

It might be thought that desperate creatures such as these, the offscourings of the country, would prove troublesome, mutinous, or murderous. But the contrary was the rule. No one, seeing their obedience, their docility (to be sure, the overseer's terrible whip was always present before their eyes), would have imagined that these men and women had once been hardened criminals, common rogues, and vagabonds. For the most part they worked cheerfully, though they lived hardly. Some of the more prudent of them, when their time was out, took up small plantations of their own, grew tobacco, and even advanced so far as to become themselves the owners of slaves, as well as of lands. Then would they fain forget the past, and, in company, when they thought themselves unknown, would even try to pass for Gentlemen Adventurers.

There was a third class of plantation slaves of whom my father would have none. I mean the men sold into captivity for religious opinions or for political offences. It was a most dreadful thing, my father said, that men whose only crime was a lack of reasoning power should be driven to work under the lash. Therefore he would never buy any Papists, Anabaptists, or Quakers, although on other plantations there were plenty of these gentry. And while other planters had servants who had been out with Monmouth, or were concerned in some of the little conspiracies of that unquiet time, my

father would have nothing to do with them. Once, indeed, in the year one thousand seven hundred and sixteen, he bought and brought home with him half-a-dozen gallant gentlemen (though they were at the time greatly cast down and unhappy in their appearance) who had been engaged on the wrong side in the rising of the Pretender. These, I say, he brought home to his house, and then, calling for wine, he made them a speech: "Gentlemen," he said, "it grieves me to see you in this piteous case. Yet believe me it might have been worse, because, although I have bought you, and, for so many years, your services are mine, yet I cannot find it in my heart to subject persons of your consideration to the rigours contemplated by your judges. I cannot, however, break the law and give you your freedom. I propose, therefore, to establish you all together on a piece of land which you will cultivate for yourselves, according to such rules as you choose to establish for your own guidance. There I will help you to what you want for necessities. And now, gentlemen"—for all began to cry aloud for surprise and joy—"here is wine, and we will drink to the health of the King—and on this side of the Atlantic we must all, whatever our opinions, add—'over the water.'"

We lived in a large house built entirely of wood, like all the houses in the country, and embellished with a wooden portico after the Grecian style, erected in front; this served instead of the verandah which most Virginian houses possess. The great chimney, which served for all the rooms, was built of brick outside the house. The room of state where my mother sat was a low room, forty feet long, lit with five windows, opening upon the great portico; in the summer the glass windows were replaced by green jalousies; the ceiling was plastered white; the walls were painted of a dull lead colour; the fireplace and mantelpiece, which were very grand, were made of walnut-wood richly carved by a London workman, in flowers, fruits, and the arms of the Carellis family gilt. In the winter there was a screen and a carpet before the fire, but in the summer these were taken away; the tables and chairs were all from London; there were portraits of our ancestors on the walls; there was a genealogical tree carrying back the family of Carellis to a patriarch who lived about the same time as Abraham (it was so stated on the tree), but

who is passed over in the sacred narrative because as I always supposed his estate was far from that of Abraham and they never met; and outside, in the portico, were chairs made of hickory wood with sloping backs, where, in the summer evenings, my father sat with his friends and smoked a cool pipe of his best Virginia.

One does not look for books on a Virginian estate; yet we had a goodly library, consisting of Captain John Smith's History of Virginia, Speed's English History, Livy done into English by Several Hands, the History of the Turks, the History of the Spaniards' Conquest of Mexico, and the True Relation of Bacon's Horrid Conspiracy. These books served for lesson books for myself, though I do not remember that anyone else ever read them. As for our overseers and people, my father was ever of opinion, in the which I agree with him, that the arts of reading and writing should only be taught to those who are in a position of authority, so that they may with the greater dignity admonish unto godliness and contentment those placed under them. The Church Catechism warrants this doctrine, to my thinking.

Our house was, in fine, a country seat which any English gentleman would be proud to call his own, furnished with guest chambers, dining-rooms, and every sort of convenience and luxury. Behind it lay a great garden planted with fruit trees, vegetables for the table, and herbs for the still-room. Before it was the square, a large cleared ground on the three sides of which stood the houses of the overseers and the slaves. All these houses were alike, built of logs, the windows without glass, the brick or mud-built chimney standing at one end; each with a little projecting verandah or lean-to, and some with a small garden, where the people grew what liked them best. There were stables, too, and coach-houses, with horses, mules, cows, turkeys, ducks, geese, fowls, and pigs. A running stream ran through the square, and after providing drinking-water above the clearing, became, below it, a gutter to carry off refuse. The pigs ran about everywhere, save in the gardens of the house; and here and there were enclosures where fattening hogs lay grunting and eating till their time arrived. It was like a great farmstead, only there were no corn ricks; the barns held meal (but it was not grown on the estate) and home-made pork and

bacon; the pigs and cattle, like the slaves, belonged to his honour; all was for him.

Beyond the house and square lay the tobacco-fields, and beyond them forest, everywhere forest. Save on that side where you rode down to the banks of the great James River running into Chesapeake Bay, you had forest on all sides, boundless and without end. Unless you knew the forest very well; unless you knew the Indian compass, the hemlock-tree, which always inclines its head to the east; and unless you could read the blazings of the trees which pointed to the homestead, you could lose yourself in the forest in five minutes; and then wander round and round in a ring of twenty yards, thinking you were walking straight ahead for miles, till starvation seized you and you fell down and presently died.

The Virginian manner of life was simple, yet plentiful. It becomes not a woman to think overmuch about eating, yet I own that the English breakfast-tables seem to me but poorly provided compared with those of Virginia. Here, indeed, you have cold meat and small ale in plenty, with bread and cheese, and, for the ladies, a dish of tea; there you had daily set forth fried fowl, fried ham, bacon and eggs, cold meat, preserved peaches, quinces, and grapes, hot wheaten biscuit, short-cake, corn-cake, griddle-cake soaked in butter, with claret or small ale for the gentlemen, and milk or milk and water for the women and children. Our wine, our malt for brewing, the best sort of our beer, our spices, our sugar, our clothes, our furniture, all came from England.

Virginia has been divided into parishes—not like your little London parishes, which consist of half an acre of houses, but great broad districts half the size of an English county. To each parish is a clergyman of the Established Church. No dissenters are allowed, nor any meeting-houses save one of Quakers. Our clergyman was paid ten thousand pounds of tobacco for all his stipend; and as he could sell it for threepence the pound, you will perceive that the clergy of Virginia are better paid than those of England. In addition to their stipend, they received two hundred pounds of tobacco for a christening, three hundred pounds for a wedding, and four hundred pounds for a funeral. Add to these advantages that the clergyman was not expected, as is too often the custom here, to rise from the table at the third

course, or to drink less wine than his host and the other guests.

Thus, then, and in so great state, did we live, in the enjoyment of every luxury that can be procured in England, together with those which are peculiar to America—notably, the soft sweet air of Virginia. We were, on our estates, our own builders, carpenters, gardeners, graziers, bakers, butchers, brewers (only we used English malt), pastry-cooks, tailors, and boot-makers. We had every variety of fish, flesh, and game; we drank Madeira, Canary, claret, cider, peach brandy, and apple wine; we formed a society of gentlefolk, separated and set apart from the settlers who had been our bought servants, and who bore in their hands the brand which no years can ever efface. We had been cavaliers in King Charles's time, but we stood up for Church and State, and welcomed the Protestant hero, great William the Deliverer. We had scant sympathy with those who would trouble the peace for the sake of a Papist Pretender, who, if all reports were true, was no son of King James at all, but had been brought into the Queen's chamber in a warming-pan. Open house was kept for all comers—all, that is, of our own station, for no peer in England was prouder of his rank than we of Virginia were of ours—and should there be a decayed gentleman of good family among us, he might still live at ease and gallantly by journeying from one plantation to another, only taking care never to outstay his welcome. And this, provided he were a man of cheerful disposition, or one who could sing, shoot, drink, and tell stories, would be difficult, or well-nigh impossible, in a Virginian house.

So we lived, and so I grew up; bred in such courtly and polite manners as were familiar with my mother, the most dignified gentlewoman in Virginia; taught to read, write, cypher (but indifferently), to work samplers, to make puddings, pies, and preserves, to distil strong waters, to brew home-made wines, to say the Catechism and respect the Church, and, naturally, to believe that there was nowhere on the surface of the earth, except, perhaps, the King of Great Britain, a man of nobler birth and grander position than his honour, Robert Carellis, my father.

But at the age of nineteen a great misfortune happened to me. The overseers brought from James Town, where they had purchased them, six men who, though we

did not know it, were suffering from gaol-fever. They all died; two of the overseers died; many of the people died; lastly, my father and mother caught the infection and died too.

Then I was left alone in the world.

I had many cousins to whom I could go, but by my father's will—made while in full expectation of death and in true Christian resignation—I was to be sent across the Atlantic to our agent in London, there to remain as his ward until I was twenty-one, when I was to be at liberty to do what I pleased with my inheritance.

CHAPTER II. ON TOWER HILL.

WE had a favourable voyage of five weeks and two days, with fair weather and no adverse winds until we arrived off the Nore, where we were compelled to lie to and anchor in the Roads, together with over a hundred other vessels, small and great, waiting for the wind to change, so that we might beat up the river to the port of London. If I was surprised at the sight of so many ships gathered together in one place, you may think how much more I was astonished as we slowly made our way up the crowded river, and finally dropped anchor in the Pool over against the Tower of London, in the midst of so many masts and such a crowd of ships as, in my ignorance, I had never dreamed of. There were East Indiamen; dusky colliers; brightly painted traders with France and Spain; prodigious great ships in the Levantine trade, armed with long carronades; round Dutch sloops; with every kind of pinnace, tender, smack, hoy, brig, schooner, yacht, barge, and ferry boat. On all these ships men were running about, loading, unloading, painting, repairing, fetching, carrying, and shouting. There, before my very eyes, rose the White Tower, of which Speed speaks so much; London Bridge was on the left; beyond it the Monument to the Great Fire; then the dome of St. Paul's, and then innumerable spires, steeples, and towers of this rich and prosperous city. I remembered, standing on the deck of the ship and seeing all these things for the first time, how we colonists had been accustomed to speak in our boastful way of America's vast plains. Why, is the greatness of a country to be measured by her acres? Then should the Dismal Swamp be more illustrious than Athens, Virginia more considerable than Middlesex, and the Potomac a greater river than the Tiber or the Thames. What have these new countries to show with the old? Why

the very stones of the old Tower, the narrow arches of the bridge, the towering cathedral, even the roofs of the houses, cry aloud to the people to remember the past, how they fought for liberty and religion, and to be jealous for the future.

It was late in the afternoon, about five o'clock, when we finally came to anchor in the Pool, and I began to wonder what was coming next. My guardian's name was Alderman Benjamin Medlycott, and he lived on Tower Hill. He and his had been agents to the Carellis plantation since we first settled there. They were far-off cousins; John Carellis the Gentleman Adventurer having been a first cousin of Carellis Medlycott, the alderman's great grandfather; so that I was not going among strangers, but my own kin.

What was he like, this formal merchant whose letters I had read? They were full of the prices current; they advised the arrival of cargo, and the despatch of wine, spices, furniture, clothes, wigs, saddles, guns, swords, sashes, and all the things which were required in the settlement of a Virginian gentleman of rank. But nothing about himself or his family.

I had not long to wait in suspense. Presently, standing on the quarter-deck with Nurse Alice, I saw the captain shake hands with a young man soberly attired in a brown square-cut coat, with long calamanco waistcoat down to his knees. I had time to look at him, because he conversed with the captain for a few minutes before the latter led him aft and presented him to me. I set him down at once as a messenger from my guardian, and I made up my mind that his dress, which was by no means so splendid as that which my father habitually wore, was in the fashion of London merchants. There was no finery; the cuffs were wide and large; steel clocks adorned the shoes; the stockings were silk, but of a dark colour; his peruke was long and curled, but not extravagant; a black silk cravat, of the kind they call a steenkirk, was round his neck, and his laced linen cuffs were of a dazzling whiteness. This splendour of linen, I learned afterwards, was thought much of by London citizens. On his hands, which were white, he wore a single signet ring. He carried no sword, but a short stick was under his arm. His hat was trimmed with silver galloon. As for his face, I could only see then that his features were straight and handsome. Was he, I thought, a son of my guardian?

After the exchange of a few words with the captain, and receiving a packet of papers, he climbed the companion, and, taking off his hat, bowed low.

"Mistress Elinor Carellis," he said, "I have the honour to present myself as the alderman's chief factor, though unworthy of that position, and your most obedient servant. My name is Christopher March."

I made him a courtesy.

"I hope," I said, "that my guardian is in good health."

"He suffers from gout, otherwise he is well. I trust," continued the chief clerk, "that you have had a favourable passage, and as much comfort as is possible on board a ship."

These compliments exchanged, Christopher March—I call him so henceforth, because he never received any other style or title—informed me that he had waiting alongside a boat to carry me ashore, and that the ship's officers would see all my boxes brought up to the house as soon as was convenient. Upon that I took leave of my friend the captain—an honest, brave sailor, and less addicted than most seafaring men to the vice of swearing—and so into the boat with Alice, my nurse.

The little voyage lasted but a few minutes, and we were presently landed at the stairs. Our conductor led us through a narrow lane, with tall warehouses on either side, and paved with round stones, which were muddy and slippery; then we turned to the right, and found ourselves in a broad and open space, which was, he told me, Tower Hill, the place where so many brave and unfortunate gentlemen's heads have fallen. On the other side I saw the beefeaters in their scarlet embroidered uniform. But I was so bewildered with the noise and the novelty of everything, that I hardly saw anything or heard what was said to me. But we had not far to go. We passed a warehouse four storeys high, and from every storey a projecting beam with ropes, which made me think of the gallows. But the beams were only for the pulleys and ropes by which bales were lifted up and down.

"This," said Christopher March, "is Mr. Alderman Medlycott's warehouse, and this"—he stopped at the door of a private house next to the warehouse—"this is Mr. Alderman Medlycott's residence."

He spoke of the alderman in tones of such great respect, that I began to feel as if part of my education had been neglected

—that part, I mean, which teaches respect to the aldermen of London. A thought also crossed my mind that this excessive respect for his master was useful in exalting his own position.

However, there was no time to think, because the door was presently opened, and we found ourselves in a large and spacious hall, containing chairs and a fireplace, with a stand of strange weapons; horns, heads of buffaloes and deer, and curious things of all sorts brought to Tower Hill by the alderman's captains, hung upon the walls. Then the maid opened a door to the right, and I found myself in the parlour of a great London city merchant.

The room was lofty, and had two windows looking upon Tower Hill; the walls were wainscoted and painted in a fashion strange to me and unknown in Virginia. A soft Turkey carpet was on the floor, a bright sea-coal fire was burning in the fireplace, though the air was not cold to one fresh from the sea breezes; there was a high mantelsheff, on which were displayed more curiosities from beyond the seas, and above them wonderful specimens of ladies' work in samplers, representing peacocks, birds of paradise, landscapes, and churches, all in satin. Seated at one window were two ladies and a gentleman, who rose to receive me. Christopher March, I observed, left me at the door with a profound bow. We made deep reverences to each other, and then I blushed because, although Alice had dressed me in all my best, I felt at once how countryfied and rustic was my appearance compared with the fine new fashions of these London ladies.

The elder lady, who was about forty-five years of age, and had a most kind face, with soft eyes, held out her hand.

"My dear," she said, "I am Mistress Medlycott, the wife of your guardian, the alderman, who is now ill with the gout, but will see you shortly; and this is my daughter Jenny, who desires your better acquaintance."

Jenny here in her turn took me by the hand. She was a little thing, and so pretty and agreeable was her face, with bright laughing blue eyes, light brown hair, a dimple in her chin, and saucy lips, that I thought I had never seen the like. "Good heavens!" I thought; "what must they think of me—ill-dressed, tall, and ungainly?"

"Mistress Elinor," said Jenny, "if I

were tall enough I would kiss you. As I am not, I hope you will stoop and kiss me. We shall be very good friends, I hope."

"I may present my Lord Eardesley," said madam, with dignity. "His lordship being here upon business with the alderman, hath requested permission to see"—here she stopped and smiled very kindly—"to see the Princess Pocahontas of Virginia."

At that little joke we all laughed. His lordship was a young man about the same height as Christopher March, but very much unlike the chief factor. For while Christopher had a way of dropping his eyes when he met your own, and of hanging his head, and in many other ways of showing that he was not perfectly at his ease with ladies, the young lord looked you frankly in the face and laughed, and was not only happy himself in being with two girls, but also made us all happy as well. Only this knowledge came later.

"I must call you Nelly," said Jenny, pressing my hand. "Elinor, or Mistress Elinor, is too long. How tall you are! And oh!"—she broke off, with a sigh and a laugh—"Nelly, the hearts of all the men will be broken."

"Pray Heaven," said my lord, "that the fragments of one, at least, be put together again."

"This is idle talk," said madam. "Mistress Elinor will despise us after the grave discourse to which, no doubt, she has been accustomed in Virginia."

"We had grave discourse," I explained, "when the Reverend Matthew Marling came to see us twice a year. At other times we talked about the crops, and my father's sport, and such topics."

Presently Lord Eardesley took his leave with more compliments. When he went away it seemed as if some of the sunshine of the room had gone with him. To be sure, a great deal of the colour had gone; for his coat was of scarlet silk, and he wore a crimson sash for his sword.

"Do not think, Nelly," said Jenny, in her quick way, "that lords associate every day with City merchants, or that we know more than one peer. Lord Eardesley has had money affairs with my father for many years, and the custom has grown up for him to call upon us whenever he calls at the counting-house. Oh, Nelly! they did not tell us what to expect."

"My dear," I said, "you will make me vain. And, indeed, I am not so pretty as you."

"Oh, I? I am a City girl, little and

saucy; but I know what a beautiful lady of family should be—she should be like you. You ought to be Lady——"

"Jenny," her mother interrupted, "for shame. As for Lord Eardesley, Elinor, he is an excellent young man; but he is, unfortunately, very poor, his father having gambled away all the money and most of the estates. Poor young Lord Eardesley will probably have to take service with the Austrian."

Jenny shook her head.

"He had better carry the Virginian colours," she said, with a laugh. "Come with me, Nelly. I will show you your room."

They had bestowed me in the best room on the first floor, which had a little room beside it for Alice. I was at first much awed by the magnificence of the bed, which was much finer and more richly hung than any in our Virginian home. But familiarity presently reconciles us to the most majestic things. Here I found my boxes and trunks, which had been brought ashore, and here was Alice taking everything out. Jenny looked on, naturally interested at the display of dress, and though she kindly said nothing, it was plain to me that she found my frocks of a fashion quite impossible to wear in London. Presently, however, we came to my jewel-case, wherein lay all the family treasures, which had been my mother's; and her delight was extraordinary when she had dressed herself up in all the necklaces, bracelets, rings, chains, and glittering gauds which had been worn by many successive matrons in the Carellis family. She then threw her little head back, waved her hands, and went through a hundred postarings and bowings.

"I am Mrs. Bracegirdle, at the theatre," she said. "This is how she looks and carries her fan, and makes eyes at the beaux in the pit."

However, we could not stop playing there, because madam sent word that the alderman was ready to see me.

It was now past six, and candles were lit. Madam herself led me to the back of the house, where was a covered way to the counting-house. Here the alderman himself was sitting with his clerk, Christopher March. One foot was wrapped in flannel, and lying on a cushion; a stick stood by the side of the arm-chair in which he sat, with a pillow to give him ease; bundles of papers were on the table before him.

"Come in, my dear," he said, in a cheery

voice—"come in. Leave her here, wife, to talk to me. Send for her when you take your dish of tea. Now, Christopher, your day's work is done. Good night to you, and be off."

The words were peremptory, but the tone was gentle. Christopher March bowed low to him, and lower still to madam, and departed. Meanwhile I looked to see what manner of man this guardian of mine might be. He was a man of sixty or so, and he had a monotonously red face, but his nose was redder still; his lips were thick and projecting; his wig was pushed a little off one side, which made him look, somehow, as if he were going to say something to make everybody laugh. His eyes were kind and soft, and his voice, though a little rough, was kind, too. In fact, as I afterwards found out, the alderman was well known for being the kindest man who ever sat on the bench of magistrates, or ruled a great house with many clerks and servants.

The first thing that he did, however, was not reassuring. He clutched the arm of his chair, leaned forward, and gazing upon me with intense eyes, he shouted:

"Death and zounds!"

Naturally, I shrank back, frightened.

"Do not be alarmed, my dear," said his wife calmly. "It is his only relief when a pinch seizes his toe."

I thought he would have a fit, for his eyes stood out of his head, and his face became quite purple. But he recovered suddenly, and, with a sigh of relief, resumed the benevolent expression which the redness of his face and his puffed cheeks could not altogether conceal.

"Sit down, my dear," he said. "I am better now! Phew! That was a pinch. If you want to know what gout is like, take a hair-pin from your pretty head and put it in the fire till it is a white heat. Then put it to the middle joint of—your thumb will do for illustration—and hold it there tight; and if you find that any method besides swearing will relieve you, I shall be glad to know what that method is. Sit down, my dear, and let us talk."

I took a chair opposite to him, and madam left us alone. He arranged his papers, and began to talk to me about my affairs.

First, after some kind compliments on my beauty (which I may pass over), he told me of his grief on receiving intelligence of my father's death, by which unhappy event he had lost a much esteemed cor-

respondent. He had always hoped, he said, to see my honoured father some day at his poor home, and offer him such hospitality as a London merchant, with the aid of his company—that of the Grocers—could command. He added, with much consideration, that it would have been his duty to recommend my father to the hospitality of the Lord Mayor, as a Virginian Gentleman Adventurer of the highest position; and he gave me to understand that in the important matter of turtle soup and fat capons, without speaking of venison, turkey, Christmas ducks, small fowl, haunches of mutton, and barons of beef, and without dwelling on the hypocras, loving cups, and their vast cellars filled with such wine as even kings cannot equal, the Worshipful Company of Grocers stood pre-eminent among the City guilds.

"Our kitchen motto," he added, with a fine feeling of pride, which, somehow, seemed to reflect credit upon him, as indicating a thrifty habit as well as a large enjoyment of good things, "is one which should be engraven on the heart of every one who loveth the good gifts of Heaven, 'Waste not—spare not;' so that while the reputation of the City be maintained, we may ever remember that there are others outside our hall not so richly favoured as ourselves. And you may see, my dear, within a stone's throw of Grocers' Hall itself, boys and even men who have, poor wretches, to make a dinner off a penny dish of beef broth, with a cup of small ale added by the charity of the cook."

After this digression, he proceeded with the main thread of his discourse, which was to the effect that, although I had some two years to wait before I attained my majority, it was his duty to lay before me an account of my affairs and of his stewardship.

And then occurred the greatest surprise of all my life. Of course I knew without being told that the daughter of Mr. Robert Carellis, his only child, was certain to be what in Virginia would be called wealthy. I could not live in the rough splendour of the plantation without looking on myself as belonging to the ranks of those who are called rich. But I was not prepared for the greatness of the fortune which my guardian announced to me.

The successive owners of the Carellis estate had all transmitted their tobacco every year to Medlycott and Company. The merchants received the cargo, sold it, and after remitting to Virginia all those

things which were required, invested the remainder of the money as advantageously as was possible. Mine was the fourth generation of this annual consignment; and though some years might be poor, some cargoes might be wrecked or spoiled, yet in the space of a hundred years the profits of the tobacco had grown up to a vast amount of money. In a word, I was a very great heiress. My guardian held in trust for me over one hundred thousand pounds, and my plantation in Virginia produced, even under the careless and easy rule of my father, more than a thousand pounds a year.

"You are worth," said Mr. Medlycott, looking at the figures with admiring eyes, "you are worth more than a plum." He smacked his lips over the word. "A plum, my dear. How few of us, unworthy and unprofitable servants that we are, achieve a plum! And how many things can be bought when one has a plum in one's hand to buy them with."

By a plum, I learned afterwards, he meant a hundred thousand pounds.

"But what am I to do with all this money?" I cried, aghast.

"You will buy, my dear," he said, laughing, "falbalas for your frocks, quilted petticoats, gold kickshaws, china, pet negro boys—"

"Oh, no," I said, laughing; "I have had quite enough of negro boys already."

"Then there is one expense saved. And as for the rest, why, my child, unless we take heed, your husband—nay, never blush—will show you how to spend it. There are gamblers enough, I warrant, among the gallants of St. James's who would cock their hats for our Virginian heiress, and leave her in the end as ragged as any fishwife. But fear not, Cousin Elinor. Here shall we keep you under lock and ward, safe from the Mobocks."

Presently he stopped, and I, fearing to trespass longer on his patience, rose to go.

He took my hand, and was about to raise it to his lips, when another twinge of gout seized him.

"My dear ward—Death and zounds!"

When I returned to the parlour I found Jenny waiting for me.

"Come," she said, "let us sit down and talk. We shall be alone for half an hour, and we have so many things to say that one does not know where to begin."

I noticed then that there was some appearance of preparation.

"It is our evening for cards," Jenny explained. "Most ladies in the City have one evening a week; and, indeed, my mother, who is fond of the game, generally plays four or five evenings in the week. But, for my part, I love better to sit out and talk."

Two silver candlesticks were on the mantelshef, lighted, and four more stood, ready to be lighted, on a card-table, set out with counters and cards.

"Have we," I asked, "so much to say?"

"Why, surely, Princess Pocahontas. We are to be friends, and to tell each other everything. Now, show your friendship by telling me how you like the name—the name"—here she blushed and laughed—"of Lysander."

"Of Lysander?"

"And Clarissa? Lysander and Clarissa. Do they go well together? I will show you his poems, and on Sunday next I will show you—himself."

I began to understand. It was a little love story that was to be confided to me.

"And does no one know anything about it?"

"Hush—sh!" She opened her eyes very wide and shook her pretty head. "No one. Christopher March receives his letters and gives them to me privately. I send mine to Will's Coffee House. It is like the novel of *Clarinda*, or the *Secrets of a Heart*, all in letters. And on Sunday mornings we sigh at each other across the pews while the people are singing the psalms."

The young man, Christopher March, then, was assisting to deceive his master by secretly receiving letters for his master's daughter. This was very remarkable in so good a young man. But I could say no more then, because the company began to arrive. They were all ladies, except Christopher March himself, who had assumed a gayer coat for the evening; and, still with the exception of that young man, they all came to play cards. A little delay, at which some waxed impatient, happened while I was introduced as the Virginian newly arrived, but presently they were all seated at the table and deep in play. Among them were one or two quite young girls, no older than Jenny or myself, and it surprised me to see them staking and losing little piles of counters, which meant, I knew, money. The ladies were very finely dressed, with patches set on artfully—some of them with more paint than I could approve—and their manners

were stately. But, Lord! to see what a change the chances of the game presently wrought in my hostess's face, which had naturally so much kindness in it. For her colour came and went, her eyes brightened, and her mouth stiffened. She represented in turns, and in a most lively manner, the varied emotions of hope, terror, indignation, joy, and despair. The other ladies were like her, but they concerned me less.

"Look at my mother," whispered Jenny. "That is the way with her every night. She says there is no other joy so great as to win at cards. Let us play and sing."

She played the spinet very prettily, and presently sang with great spirit, "As down in the meadows I chanced to pass."

Christopher March applauded, and then asked me to sing. I declined, because I wished to do nothing but look on that first night. Then he began to talk to us, and paid compliments, at which Jenny laughed contemptuously—it was clear that her father's clerk was a person of small position in her eyes.

At twelve o'clock the chairs came, and the ladies presently rose to go. After what promised to be an endless shouting of bearers and link boys, with more swearing, the chairs were got away at last.

Madam sank into a seat and pressed her hands to her head.

"Did ever woman have such luck?" she cried, lifting her face.

"You have lost, madam?" asked Christopher, with a grave face.

She groaned.

"I shall want to see you to-morrow morning, Christopher," she said. "Girls, go to bed. Elinor, my dear, I thought you would bring me good luck."

To be sure, as the sequel proved, my arrival was the beginning of the worst luck in the world.

All night I lay awake listening to the rolling and rumbling of carts and coaches, which never seemed to stop. About three in the morning there was a lull, but the noise began again at six, and at seven it was at its height again, with shouting of men and cries of the streets.

"Oh, nurse!" I cried, "is London always so full of noise?"

"Always," she replied. "There is never any lull from year to year. It is the labour of the world which makes this noise."

She dressed me, and I went downstairs. No one was there yet, although it was

already half-past seven, and Betty, the maid, when she came to clear away the card-tables and set out the breakfast, was astonished to see me so early. I waited a little, and then took refuge with Jenny, who was lying awake, reading *Lysander's* last.

"It is beautiful, Nelly," she cried, with sparkling eyes. "How should you like to have a man writing to you—verses, you know, not prose—beautiful verses like this:

Sure, Jenny hath some secret charm
That she doth guard, but not discovers,
To raise the hopes and soothe th' alarm
Of all her sighing, anxious lovers."

It did not seem to me very real, or if the poet meant it; but it would have been unkind to say so.

"When my mother loses at cards," she told me, "she always sends for Christopher March. He gives her money without my father knowing anything about it. What she does with the money which she wins, I cannot tell."

Then we went downstairs and had a dish of chocolate for breakfast. The chocolate was good, but I missed the abundant and plentiful provision of things which we had in Virginia. Not that one wanted to eat more, but in America, as I have already said, there is always on the tables a prodigality of good things, as if nature was lavish with her gifts.

After breakfast I stood at the window and looked at the people. There was a company of soldiers in red coats going through drill; at the right-hand side, a little in advance, stood the fagleman, with a pike, and it seemed to me as if the men were all copying him; in front of them was a sergeant, brave with ribbons, giving the orders in a hoarse voice, and with him a drummer boy, smart and ready. The open space north of the Tower was crowded with groups of sailors waiting to be hired by the captains of trading-ships, who marched gravely about among them, asking questions of one and another, and sometimes engaging one. In one place a quarrel and a fight, quickly begun and soon ended; in another a pump, whither I see a crowd haling a boy with shouts and laughter, and presently pumping upon him till he is half drowned. Then they let him go, and he creeps away, wet and faint with ill-usage.

Then, when I had tired of looking out of the window nothing would please Jenny but that I must go a-shopping in Cheapside. It

was already eleven of the forenoon, and the streets were filled with people. I was so rustic and ignorant that I was for stopping at every shop and gazing stupidly at every crowd, so that people had much ado not to run against me. However, Jenny made me take the wall, and by leading me through the narrow lanes and passages which make this wonderful city like an ant-hill, she conveyed me safely to Cheapside, where for two hours we were shown the most wonderful things; and I laid out a great sum of money, by Jenny's advice and instigation, all to make me fine. There were wadded calico wrappers; a musk-coloured velvet mantle, lined with squirrel skins; falbalas; laced shoes with high heels; roundabout aprons with pockets; hoods; satin frocks; whalebone hoops; a gold repeating watch, with a gold chain; a gold étoi for needles and scissors, and all sorts of vanities, the like of which I had never before dreamed of; and yet they pleased me, Heaven knows, being a girl, and therefore by nature prone to love these worthless yet pretty things. Besides, as Jenny said, "You are a great heiress, my dear. It is fitting that you should dress so that no one will mistake you for a poor, penniless country maid." I wanted to present her with something to herself, but she would have nothing except an ostrich egg, set in a rim and feet of silver, which took her fancy, together with a silver-gilt box for carraway comfits, to be taken during long sermons; the lid, I remember, was beautifully enamelled with a Cupid fishing for hearts. And one little thing she bought herself. It was a ninepenny-piece, bent both ways by no less a person than the great Lilly, the fortune-teller. Jenny bought it for luck at langter-a-loo. But I never heard that it brought her any, and I fear that the man who sold it was dishonest—perhaps Lilly never saw the coin, and the dealer himself may have bent that piece. As for lip-salves, rouge, and all the things which we were asked to buy, I would have none of them; and, indeed, Jenny owned that I needed not the artifices with which some of the pale City madams are fain to heighten and set off their graces.

The next day we went to church at ten in the morning. The church of our parish was that of St. Olave, a beautiful structure, built by that great architect Sir Christopher Wren. Our own pew was square, with straw hassocks and red serge seats, high and narrow. I was astonished

to see the ladies as they came in bowing to their friends in the pews. Nor did it seem to me becoming for gentlemen carrying their hats under one arm, and having their canes suspended from the button of their right sleeve, to take out little telescopes and look up and down the church spying out their friends. Several of these tubes were directed at our pew, and I saw Jenny suddenly drop her eyes upon her prayer-book, and assume an air of devotion which I had not thought to belong to her nature.

In Virginia we had service for all alike, the household, the convicts, and the negroes, so that I was sorry to see in this church none but the well-to-do, with the respectable clerks and their wives. Surely, I thought, free-born Britons of all kinds should be brought to the ordinances of religion as much as negroes and convict slaves. The clergyman who read the prayers was a young gentleman fresh from the University of Oxford, where, I learn, they for ever run after some new thing. The language of the prayer-book was not, it seems, to his liking. He would have "pardons" instead of "pardoneth," and "absolves" for "absolveth;" but I think his taste was wrong when he chose to read, "endue 'um, enrich 'um, prosper 'um," instead of "endue them," &c., as I had been accustomed to read.

While the psalms were singing, Jenny nudged me gently with her hand, and I saw her turn her head half round and look straight across the church. Then she shut her eyes, and gently raised and dropped her head, and I remembered what she told me about their sighs in church. Sure enough, on the opposite side of the church, was a young gentleman who was affected in exactly the same manner. He did not appear to me to be possessed of a very noble appearance, being small, pale, and with a turned-up nose, a feature which in men should be straight, or perhaps Roman. When we sat down, our heads being well below the top of the pew, Jenny whispered to me that it was Lysander. The lesson for the day was a chapter of Proverbs, and there were in it certain verses which seemed a special rebuke for the frivolity of us girls. "Favour is deceitful and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised."

The sermon, a very long one under five heads, was preached by the rector himself, in whose face and voice I seemed to

perceive some resemblance to my guardian the alderman, for his cheeks and nose were red and puffed, and his voice was thick. He was, in fact, the chaplain of the Grocers' Company, and, as such, was present at all their feasts. At last he finished the sermon, and we all got up and came away. If the ragged boys had not come to the service, at least they were standing outside the doors, and while we thronged the porch there was a cry of pickpocket, and one of them darted from the crowd and fled through some of the lanes, followed by two or three.

The next day, after serious talk with madam, I began to undertake the study of those things in which I could not fail to be ignorant. The most important were that I should learn to dance, and that I should be improved in music and singing, and for these I had masters. My dancing-master, who took the first place, and considered himself an artist of the greatest distinction, was the *Sieur Isaac Lemire*, a French gentleman of Huguenot descent, born in London. He was a man of little stature, somewhat over the middle age, with thin features and bright eyes. He was very careful about his dress, which was always in accordance with the most recent French fashion; he spoke English as well as French; and when he went out to give a lesson he was followed by a negro boy carrying the fiddle with which he accompanied his instruction.

"*Mademoiselle*," he said with a profound bow, on being introduced to me, "I am charmed by the prospect of lending a fresh grace to one already possessed of so fine a figure and so beautiful a face. *Mistress Jenny*, I am your very humble servant. You will, I trust, assist us in our task."

Jenny always stayed, partly because she loved dancing and partly because this professor talked during the whole lesson, and gave us the latest West End news, which we could not get from the Postman or the Examiner.

"A young lady dancing," said the professor, tuning his fiddle and occasionally allowing one foot a preliminary flourish as if for a treat. "A young lady dancing is a brandished torch of beauty. She is then most dangerous to the heart of man; she is then most powerful." *Twang-twang*. "You will now, *mademoiselle*, have the goodness to pay attention to the carriage of *Miss Jenny* while she treads with me the minuet *de la cour*." It is a

beautiful dance, the minuet. My heart warmed for it at once; the stateliness of it; the respect for woman which is taught by it; the careful bearing of the body, the grace of the studied gestures, which must be in harmony with the music; all these things made me love the minuet. That was our first lesson; but the professor was not contented with the minuet only, although that dance was the most important. We had, besides, the English country dances; we danced the *Hey*, with *Joan Sanderson*, the *Scotch reel*, the *round*, and the *jig*. He taught us, besides, the old-fashioned dances, such as used to be danced at Court, the *saraband*, which *Jenny* did very prettily, with the help of castanets, and *coranto*, and the *cotillon*. And then he taught us figures of his own country, such as the *Auvergne bourrée*, the *Basque step*, and the *jigs of Poitou and Picardy*.

Once, when we were in the midst of our lesson, Lord Eardesley paid us a visit. Then it was delightful to practise with him as a partner, while *Jenny* played the spinet and the professor the violin. And his lordship and the professor, and *Jenny*, too, all said kind things of my grace and quickness in learning.

So began my new life, with kindness, hospitality, and affection, such as I had not looked for nor expected. When the alderman grew better I found him the most delightful of companions, full of stories about the greatness of London and the vastness of her commerce. I was troubled, however, in my mind when I thought what he would say if he knew that his wife secretly took money from *Christopher March*, and that his daughter, by help of the same agent, was carrying on correspondence with a secret lover.

As for nurse, she began by being heavy and dull, whereat I guessed, rightly, that she was thinking over that bad past which never left her mind. She spoke little of it, but once when we were crossing *Tower Hill*, and I gave a penny to a ragged brat, she began to cry gently, and told me that she had once a son who might have been like that poor boy, as friendless and neglected. "And their end, my dear, is to carry a musket for sixpence a day and so get killed in battle, or to go a-thieving and so get hung."

After a while, however, she cheered up and found her way to the place which most delighted her, the still-room. Here she sat among the bottles and compounds,

making lavender water, ratafia water, decoction of primroses for toothache, cowslip wine, elderflower wine, and elderberry wine, preserving poppy-heads and camomile for fever pains, horehound for coughs, trying all the thousand receipts which a woman of her condition of life should, if she be a notable woman and take a pride in her own knowledge, understand perfectly. And madam said that she had never a still-room maid with half her handiness and knowledge.

CHAPTER III. RIVAL SUITORS.

NATURALLY, I had to unlearn a good many of the opinions which I had learned in Virginia. For instance, I thought there that in England everyone was honest except those few exceptions who, being caught, were either hanged or else branded in the hand, well-flogged, and sent across the seas to us. I now learned that for one so caught there were a hundred thieves at large, and that every unknown person was considered dishonest until the contrary was proved. As for my ideas of religion, it was always difficult for me to believe that the fine ladies and gentlemen in the City churches were so devout as our poor Virginian convicts. As for our amusements, I could not learn to like cards, because it seemed to me cruel to take the money of a player who could not afford to lose it. But I liked the City shows; when we could look on from a window and see the processions, the Lord Mayor's day of state when he sat in his gilded coach, preceded by the train-bands, the City companies, and the masons, singing, "Hey! the merry masons; Ho! the merry masons," as they went, while the cannon were fired and the bells clashed. On the Fifth of November they carried Gog and Magog through the streets with more bands. Sometimes the butchers made a wedding merry-making with bones and drums; at Christmas the waits came at midnight—

Sing high, sing low, sing to and fro,
Go tell it out with speed;

and the mummers came without being invited—Turks, sweeps, kings and queens—and frolicked among us as long as they listed. And at the New Year we had parties at which the alderman would have no cards, but only the merry old games of blind man's buff, hot cockles, and country bumpkin. On Twelfth Night we looked for the bean in the cake. In the spring, when the flowers came, whenever

there was a City rejoicing we had gardeners' walks made in the streets and lanes with green arches and rows of flowers—lupins, bachelor's buttons, peony roses, ribbon grass, and the like. There was, indeed, no lack of amusement for me, a girl who had seen so little.

It took me long to learn the value of money. To teach it was the alderman's share in my education. He gave me whatever I wanted, but made me enter it in a book which he kept for the purpose. I put it down on the left hand side; and on the right I set out all that I had bought. It was a record of vanity, for the most part, and my cheeks burned while the alderman read it aloud.

"To laced gloves, two shillings; to satin for a frock, five guineas; to hoops for ditto, twelve shillings. Truly, my dear, no husband will be wanted to teach thee how money may be spent. Let us consider how it has been made. These gloves of thine stand for eight pounds of tobacco; this satin for four hundredweight—a grievous load of tobacco for your slender shoulders. How many naked wretches have risen early and toiled all day in the sun beneath the whip to sow, plant, weed, keep clean, pick, and roll this tobacco before it could be sold or exchanged for thy satin frock? They have fared of the worst, these poor creatures, and toiled the hardest, all that thou mightest go in satin and hoops. Of a truth, my dear, thy lines have been cast in pleasant places."

The alderman, to be sure, had his own weaknesses. I might have asked him, for example, why he ate turtle soup and drank the strong wine of Oporto, when so many boys were running ragged and uncared for about the streets. Nevertheless, his words were timely, and made me understand what a thoughtless girl was I who could, without reflection, thus waste and lavish the money which the labour of so many poor wretches had been given to save up. And yet, whether I spent the money or whether I saved it, made no difference to the convicts or the negroes.

But the thing which most astonished me was the conversation of the young ladies who called upon Jenny and me and were our friends. For, when we were all alone together, they talked about nothing but love-making and how to attract the admiration and attention of men. For my own part I suppose that if I had ever thought about it at all, I had considered it

likely that I should some day marry some one, and so dismissed the matter from my mind. The ordered course of things would come in due time. But these girls were continually thinking and talking about the lover of the present or of the future; they had their little secrets; they would show each other songs and verses addressed to their fair eyes, just as Jenny did; they discussed the beaux, their dress, their carriage, their impudence, or their wit (mostly, I believe, their wit was impudence); and they openly pitied, or derided, any of their friends who had failed to find a lover and was destined to lead apes in that place which frivolous and thoughtless persons are too ready to name lightly.

"Were you not so tall, Nelly," said Jenny, when I first remonstrated with her on this idle talk, "I would call you little Puritan. But prithee consider. If it were not for the attention and thought that men bestow upon us and we upon them, what would become of the men? It is for their own good, my dear, more than for ours, that we seek to attract their foolish eyes."

Here, indeed, was a pretty turning of the tables!

"No man, my dear," she went on, laughing, "can possibly make any figure in the world until he begins to hope for our favours. Then, indeed, he pays attention to his figure and his manners, learns to talk, dresses himself in the latest mode, carries himself with a fashionable air, and becomes a pretty fellow. Then, to attract the eyes of one of us, he studies to distinguish himself, and when he cannot succeed he tries to be different from his fellows, and commits a thousand pretty follies. Such, my dear, are a few of the benefits we confer upon our lovers."

Jenny stopped and laughed again.

"What part does Lysander play?" I asked.

At that she smiled and blushed prettily. "Lysander," she said, "has offended his Clarissa. I have had enough verses, and I have written to say that if he wishes to gain my favours in reality, he must now, in person, inform me of his rank and name."

"Good heavens, child!" I cried. "Do you mean that you have been in correspondence with a man whose very name you have not learned?"

"'Tis even so," she replied, laughing. "No harm has been done, my fair Puritan

princess; Clarissa has written nothing that would hurt her reputation; trust Clarissa, who is a Londoner, for taking care of herself. As Lysander prettily says, 'Clarissa doth command an awe, would straight confound the great Bashaw.' He may be a lord, or he may be a templar; I fear he is the latter. But what a noble air he shows, particularly when he sighs during the psalms!"

I thought of his turned-up nose, and was unable to agree with Jenny, but did not tell her so.

The one thing which displeased me at this time was the constant intrusion of Christopher March into all our plans and conversation. We could go nowhere without meeting him, and then he would walk with us; if we were playing or singing he would join us without being asked; he generally took dinner with us, and on madam's evenings was always one of the company. That did not matter much but for his attentions to me, which were incessant, especially before company. It was as if he wished the world to consider me as his property. Of course, I was not so foolish but that I understood the meaning of his politeness; a week of Jenny's talk had been sufficient to remove the ignorance of my Virginian days; but, naturally, being a Carellis, I was not so mad as to think of encouraging the mere clerk of my guardian, a paid servant, to aspire to such a thing as marriage with me. My only difficulty was to know how, without being cruel and unkind, I could get rid of the man.

I supposed, and rightly, too, that it was he who sent me verses and epistles written in the same extravagant fashion as that followed by Jenny's Lysander, and signed "A Lover." I kept them all carefully and said nothing even to Jenny. But I told Nurse Alice, and bade her watch and find out by what means they were conveyed to my bedroom.

Alice presently informed me that they were placed on my table by Prudence, the housemaid. So I sent for the young woman and roundly taxed her with the fact, which she confessed with tears and promises of amendment.

"But, girl," I said, "who gave you the verses?"

At first she refused to tell me, but being pressed and threatened, she owned that it was none other than Christopher March. And here I made another discovery. Not only had this man won the alderman's

complete confidence by reason of his industry and zeal, not only had he gotten a hold over madam by secretly giving her money, and over Jenny by conniving at her correspondence, but he had made the very servants afraid of him by acquiring a knowledge of their secrets and by letting them feel that their situations and characters depended upon his pleasure. When I understood the state of the case I considered whether I ought not to let the alderman know, and to ask him whether it was proper for one of his servants to gain this footing and authority in his own house. And yet I dared not for the sake of madam, for I knew not how much money Christopher March had supplied her with. I would that I had told him all, and so saved—but that I could not know—the honour and the fortune of that good old man!

Well; I sent away the girl forgiven and a little comforted—he sure I did not ask the nature of her secret—and I determined to seek out Christopher March and explain myself openly to him.

I waited till one afternoon, when madam and Jenny had both gone out a-shopping and I was private in the parlour. Then I sent Alice to invite my gallant to an interview.

He came straight from the counting-house, wearing his office brown coat, and looking exactly what he was, a merchant's clerk and servant. Yet he tried to assume a gallant air and stepped with as much courtliness as he could manage.

"Christopher March," I began, "I have asked you to come here when I am alone because I have a serious discourse to hold with you."

He bowed and made no reply.

"I am an ignorant American girl," I went on, "and unused to the ways of London. But I am not so ignorant as not to know the meaning of those compliments and attentions with which you have honoured me."

"Oh, Mistress Elinor," he cried, sinking on his knees, "give your most humble adorer a little hope."

"Get up immediately," I said, "or I will leave the room. Get up, sir, and stand or sit, as you will, but do not presume again to address me in that way." I was now really angry. "Remember, sir, if you can, that I am a gentlewoman, and you are a clerk. Know your position."

He rose as I bade him.

"In London," he said, in a soft, slow

voice with down-dropped eyes, "young men of obscure family have a chance of rising. Many a Lord Mayor began by being an errand-boy. It is true that I have no coat-of-arms. Yet I am already well-considered. If the alderman does not make me a partner, some other merchant may. No clerk in the tobacco trade has a better reputation than I have. I could bring your ladyship a good name and an honest heart. What better things can a man have than honesty and honour?"

"Assuredly, nothing. Give them, therefore, to some young woman of your own station. Meantime, Master Christopher March, take back these foolish verses and these letters. Let me have no more nonsense. There can be no question of that kind between us; none at all."

He received the letters with dark and gloomy brow.

"You will not only cease your letters; you will entirely cease your compliments and your attentions. You understand what you have to do?"

"And if I disobey your ladyship's commands?"

"In that case I must inform the alderman. I should, at the same time, ask him to consider the nature of that 'honour and honesty' of which you make such boast, when it permits you to advance madam sums of money of which her husband knows nothing; secretly to assist his daughter in a silly correspondence; and secretly to threaten his servants."

"You would, then," he replied coldly, "do much more harm to the alderman's happiness than you would do to mine."

"Perhaps. But I should do all the harm to you that I wish; which is nothing but that you should continue to be the faithful servant which the alderman believes you to be, that you should not aspire beyond your station, and that you should confine yourself entirely, so far as I am concerned, to your duties. Perhaps you had better return, then, at once to the counting-house, or the alderman may be examining the books for himself and find out where some of his money goes."

He turned suddenly white, and glared at me with eyes which had as much terror as rage in them. Then he left me without another word. But I knew that I had made of Christopher March an enemy, though being young and foolish I did not believe he could harm me. I have since learned that there is no man, however humble, who cannot at least do mischief.

Some men, by their evil lives and base thoughts, may lose the power of doing good; but the power of wickedness never leaves us. I had, however, the good sense to tell Alice what I had done; she, though this I knew not till afterwards, began to watch the movements of the man until, long before the rest of us knew anything about him, she had learned all his secrets.

I told Jenny something of what had passed, and, to my great joy, she laughed and clapped her hands, and kissed me.

"Oh, Nelly," she said, "I am so glad. I have seen for a long while what was coming and I did not dare to warn you. Besides, he threatened——"

"Jenny!" I cried. "Is it possible? Did you allow your father's servant to threaten you?"

"What could I do?" she replied. "He knows all about—about Lysander, you know."

"Oh! this is dreadful, Jenny. Go straight and tell your father, child, and then you can laugh at him." But this she would not do, fearing the alderman's displeasure.

The next thing I tried to do was to persuade madam to go to her husband for money to pay her debts of honour. The good lady was growing more passionately addicted to cards every day, and, whether she played ill or had continual bad luck, she seemed never to win. Then it was difficult for me, a young woman, to remonstrate freely with her, and though I spoke a little of my mind once, Jenny being out of the room, I could not persuade her to tell her husband all. So that failed. Yet had I succeeded, all the unhappiness that was to follow would have been averted. Fate, as the Turk calls it, or Providence, as we more rightly say, is too strong to be set aside by the efforts of a weak girl. We were all to be punished in a way little expected for our sins and weaknesses, and the wicked man was to work his wicked will for a little space.

"Alas!" said Jenny, sitting in my room where we could talk freely. "He is a dangerous man, and I would he were not so much in my father's confidence. Before you came the attentions which displeased you were offered to me. He actually wanted me to marry him! Perhaps that would have been my fate, but for your arrival. The chance of getting a hundred thousand pounds for a fortune with such a wife as you turned his head, and I now fear him no longer. It would, indeed, be

a rise in life for a gutter-boy like him to marry you, the Virginian heiress."

"Why do you call him a gutter child?"

"Because he was, as much as any of those ragged little wretches playing out there on Tower Hill. He would willingly hide the story if he could; but he never shall, so long as I live to tell it for him. Such as those boys are, such was he; as ragged, as dirty, as thievish, I daresay; as ready to beg for a penny to get him a dish of broth. He was found lying on the doorstep one cold and wintry day in March, barefooted, bareheaded, stupid with cold and hunger. My father had him taken to the kitchen to be warmed and fed. Then, seized with pity for a boy so forlorn, he gave him to one of his porters to be brought up at his expense. Then he sent the lad to school, where he got on, being quick and clever. Finally he took him into his own counting-house, and gave him a chance to rise in the world, as so many poor boys have already done in London. Me-thinks he has risen already high enough."

Let us leave Christopher March for the present, and talk of more pleasant things.

I have said that Lord Eardesley once or twice called upon us when we were with Monsieur Lemire, the dancing-master, and took part in our lesson. During the winter he came but little, to my chagrin; because, having then no thought of what was to follow, I found his manner and discourse pleasing. He brought new air to the house, and talked of things which otherwise we should not have heard of. It did us all good when his lordship came in the evening and took a dish of tea with us. Then madam forgot her cards, Jenny put on her finest airs, and the alderman, who generally despised tea, joined us and told stories. The best tea-cups were set out—those, namely, brought from Canton by one of the alderman's seafaring friends—the reserve or company candles were lit, and the tea brewed was stronger and better than that which we allowed ourselves. After tea we would go to the spinet and sing, Jenny and I in turn or together.

Those were pleasant evenings, but there were few of them. My lord was a most cheerful and agreeable man, without any of the fashionable affectations of which Jenny had told me; full of sense and understanding. He did not waste the time in paying us foolish compliments, and when he spoke of himself, he laughed at his own lamentable condition as an

impooverished peer. He told us once, I remember, that he seldom dined at his friends' houses, because he could not afford the vails expected by the servants.

So the winter passed quickly away, and the spring came upon us with those easterly winds which in England do so poison and corrupt that sweet season.

As the year advanced the attention of everyone was settled upon that great bubble, the South Sea Company, whose stock advanced daily till it reached seven hundred, eight hundred, and even a thousand pounds. I knew little, indeed, and cared nothing, because I understood nothing, of the general greediness, yet we heard daily from the alderman, at dinner and supper, how the shares were fought for, and what prodigious prices they fetched. And once he took me to the Exchange, where I saw a crowd of finely-dressed ladies and gentlemen mixed with a throng of merchants and tradesmen, all struggling, fighting, and shouting together. They were buying and selling South Sea Stock. The street posts or the backs of porters served for writing-desks; he who had a bunk or a stall commanded as much rent as if it had been a great house in Eastcheap; and, in that crowd, a petty huckster of Houndsditch, if he had but a single share, was as great a man as a lord.

"See, Nelly," said the alderman; "the love of money is like the hand of death; for it strikes at all alike, both rich and poor."

The alderman, who believed that Sir Robert Walpole was the greatest and wisest of statesmen, took fright when he heard that the minister had spoken in the House vehemently against the South Sea Scheme, to which, before this, he had perhaps secretly inclined. "It was a project," said this great man, "which would lure many thousands of greedy and unwary people to their ruin; holding out promises which it never could keep, and offering dividends which no scheme ever devised could maintain."

While everybody else was mad with this dream of wealth, we in our house were full of our own thoughts, careless of the tumult which raged in every heart. As the spring advanced, Lord Eardesley came oftener, and would go with us when we drove out to take the air. London is a great city, indeed, but it is richly provided with fields, gardens, parks, and places of recreation. We could drive to the spring gardens of Knightsbridge; to the bowling-green of

Marylebone; to the fields beyond Islington, where we bought cakes; or to those of Stepney, where there is another kind of cake; or to the walk of Chelsea, where there are buns. We could go farther afield and visit Caen Wood and Hampstead, or to the gardens beyond Hyde Park, where they sold syllabubs. We were a gay and happy party whenever we had his lordship with us. And for one thing I am grateful, indeed, to Jenny, that though she suspected what was coming, she was so good as not to spoil the innocence of my happiness by telling me her suspicions.

One evening in April—ah! happy evening—Lord Eardesley took us to the theatre.

Suppose you were never to go to a theatre at all until you were nineteen years of age; suppose you had read of a dramatic performance, but never seen one; and suppose you had no idea whatever what it would be like. Then think of going—for the first time!

It was to Drury Lane. We drove to the doors, where we were met by my lord, in brave attire. He led us to the first row of boxes, where, for the most part, only ladies of quality are found, the wives of citizens commonly using the second row. Truly it passes my power to express the happiness of this evening and the splendour of the scene. The pit contained only gentlemen, but the boxes in which we sat were full of ladies dressed in extravagance of splendour of which I had never dreamed, nor Jenny either. But the patches spoiled all; nor could I ever, although for the sake of the mode I wore two or three small ones, reconcile myself to the custom of sticking black spots over a pretty face. The house was brilliantly lit with many thousands of candles. I say nothing about the play, except that the players did so artfully represent the characters that you would have thought the house, with all the audience, a dream, and only the play itself the reality. Yet I was astonished to find so many fine ladies whispering, laughing, and flirting with the fan, while the most moving scene and the most eloquent passages failed to rouse their interest.

"You know not your sex, fair Virginian," said Lord Eardesley, when I ventured to take this objection to the behaviour of the spectators. "The ladies do not come here to see, but to be seen. They are the principal spectacle of the house to the gentlemen in the pit."

And then I observed that, although I

myself could see with the greatest ease whatever was done upon the stage, and the faces of the actors and actresses, a large number of gentlemen, especially those of the younger kind, were affected with a sort of blindness which forced them to carry to the theatre the little magnifying tubes which I had seen in church. And such was the strange callousness of these unfortunate young men to the piece performed, that many of them at the side of the pit stood with their backs to the stage, and, with their tubes held to one eye, surveyed the glittering rows of beauties on the first tier of boxes.

"Nelly," whispered Jenny, "you are the prettiest girl in the house. Half a hundred beaux are gazing upon you."

In the delight of the play I forgot the annoyance of this attention, and, perhaps, Jenny was mistaken.

When we came away, at the falling of the curtain, we found the entrance-hall lined with a double row of pretty fellows, all hat under arm and right leg thrust forward. One of them stepped audaciously forward to the front and offered to lead me to the coach.

"This young lady, sir," said my lord, "is of my party. We thank you."

The young fellow said something about pretty faces and hoods, upon which our escort stepped forward and whispered in his ear.

"I am Lord Eardesley," he said aloud. "You can find me when you please."

I did not know enough of polite customs to suspect that the altercation might possibly, although so slight, lead to a duel.

Alas! that this custom of duelling should make every young man hold his life in his hand; so that it is less dangerous to cross the Atlantic Ocean, or to travel among the Indians of Western Virginia, or to serve a campaign against the Turk, than it is to live in London for a season—I mean, for a young gentleman of birth and rank. As for plain citizens, I have never heard that the custom of the duello has been brought into the manners of the London merchant.

I thought little that night of the matter, my head being full of the wonderful play. But the next day, when I was sitting alone and feeling a little sad, as is the way with foolish girls after an evening of great happiness, Jenny burst in upon me in a half hysterical state of excitement.

"Nelly!" she cried. "Have you heard

the news? They have fought, and my lord has pricked his man."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"You remember the dapper little man at the theatre last night, who insulted us by calling us pretty girls—the wretch! As if we did not know so much already. 'Twas an officer in the Guards. Lord Eardesley fought him this morning in the Park with small swords, and ran him through the left shoulder. He is as brave as he is generous."

It was quite true. Our evening's pleasure had ended in two gallant gentlemen trying to kill each other, and one being wounded. Surely the laws of honour did not need so tragic a conclusion to so simple an adventure. Nevertheless, I was proud of Lord Eardesley, and rejoiced that he was so brave a gentleman.

He came that evening. Madam was abroad, playing cards. Jenny and I were alone; and presently Jenny rose and left the room. She told me afterwards that my lord had asked her to do so.

Then he begged permission to speak seriously to me, and my heart beat because I knew, somehow, what he was going to say.

That is, I knew what his speech would contain, but I could not guess the manner in which he would say it. He began by saying that he was the poorest man of his rank in Great Britain; that all his wealth consisted of a barren mountain, a marshy valley, and a ruined castle in Wales; that in offering his hand to a rich heiress like myself he should be accused of fortune-hunting.

"Nay, Mistress Nelly," he went on, "I must confess that at first my thoughts ran much upon the money of which you are possessed. That was the reason why, having had the happiness of seeing you, I came here once or twice, and then ceased my visits. But," he added, "I was constrained to return. And having come, I was drawn daily by irresistible ropes to the shrine of my affection." He took my hand and held it. "Nelly, rich or poor, believe that I love you tenderly."

I made no reply. Oh! that life could be one long rapture such as that which followed when he took me in his arms and kissed my lips.

I cannot write more of that moment. It would be a sacrilege of that first baptism or sacrament of love when we promised our hands and hearts to each other.

Presently, however, Jenny came back,

discreetly knocking at the door—the little witch!

"Jenny, my dear," cried my lord, "come kiss me." He laid his hands upon her shoulders, and kissed the pretty little laughing thing as gaily as if a kiss meant nothing. Heavens! what had it meant to me? "See, this Princess of Virginia, this queen of fair maidens—she has promised, my pretty Jenny, to be my wife."

"No—not a queen at all," I murmured, while Jenny flew into my arms and kissed me again and again. "Not a queen—only my lord's handmaid. It may be that I have found favour in the sight of my king—"

"Not a queen? No," he replied, kissing my hands. "No—not a queen—only my mistress, sweet and fond—only Nelly, my Heart's Delight!"

CHAPTER IV. MY LORD EARDSLEY.

WHEN my lover left me he immediately sought the alderman in order to convey to his worship the substance of what he had said to me. My guardian heard the story patiently, and then, falling into a kind of muse, sat with his head upon his hands, saying never a word.

"Why, sir," said my lord with some heat, after waiting for a reply, "surely my proposal hath no dishonour in it. I can but offer Mistress Elinor what I have to give. It is little, as you know, besides my hand and a coronet."

"Sit down, my lord," said the alderman gravely. "I have much to say."

He then proceeded in such terms as would give the young suitor as little pain as possible, to remind him that his own estates, save for the mountain and valley in Wales, were gone altogether, and that by his father's rashness over the gaming-table, so that had it not been for the small fortune left him by his mother his lordship would have nothing. But, said the alderman, the lack of fortune would have been a small thing, considering the ample inheritance of his ward, were he assured that none of the late lamented peer's weaknesses had descended upon his son. Lord Eardsley must excuse him for speaking plainly, but it was rumoured, rightly or wrongly, that he himself was addicted to the same pernicious habit.

Here my lord protested strongly that the rumour was based upon no foundation whatever in fact, and that he never gambled.

"Indeed," the alderman replied gravely.

"Then am I rejoiced, and I hope that these words of yours can be made good."

After this he became more serious still, and, speaking in a whisper, he reminded the young lord that there were other sins besides the grievous sin of gaming, that many—nay, most of the young gentlemen of rank took a pleasure and pride in deriding and breaking all God's laws; that they were profane swearers, professed atheists, secret Jacobites, duellists, deceivers of maidens, and contempters of order; that the voice of rumour had been busy with his name as concerns these vices as well.

Here Lord Eardsley protested again. He would confess to none of these things. A duel he had certainly fought only a few days before, but that was in defence of two ladies—in fact, Mistress Elinor Carellis herself and Mistress Jenny, the alderman's own daughter—but, he added, he had spared the life of his adversary, and only given him a lesson. That personally he abhorred the cursed laws of so-called honour which obliged a gentleman to risk his life or seek to take another life at any fancied insult. As for the other vices mentioned by the alderman, he declared that he was not guilty of any of them; that his life and conversation were pure, and his religion that of his forefathers.

"It may be so," said the alderman. "Nevertheless, we do well to be careful. The young lady is an orphan; she hath neither brother nor near relation to protect her should her husband use her ill; she is a stranger in the land and ignorant of the wickedness of this great town; like all innocent maidens, she is accustomed to look on every stranger, if he be a gentleman, as a good man; she admires a gallant carriage, a noble name, a long pedigree, a handsome face—and all these, my lord, she admires in you. Then, she is a great heiress; her husband will have, with her, a hundred thousand pounds in bonds, scrip, and mortgages, and none of your perilous South Sea stock, besides a great estate in Virginia. Think of all this, my lord. Consider further that she hath been placed in my charge as a most sacred trust by my far-off cousin, Robert Carellis, now deceased, out of the great confidence which he was good enough to repose in me—and own that I do well to be careful. Remember that she is all virtue and innocence; and that, according to the voice of rumour, you, my lord—pardon the plain speaking—are

addicted to the—the same manner of life as most young noblemen. Why you would be a wicked man, indeed, if you thought that I should easily consent to her marriage and without due forethought."

"Take all forethought and care possible," said my lord. "I assure you the voice of rumour was never so wrong as when it assigned me the possession of those fashionable follies which, I may remind you, require the waste of a great deal of money."

"True," my guardian replied. "That is a weighty argument in your favour. Meanwhile, my lord, we thank you for the honour you have offered to confer upon this house. I am sure that his honour Robert Carellis would have wished for no higher alliance for his daughter, were he satisfied on those points on which I have ventured to speak. I go now, my lord, or I shall go shortly, to make such enquiry into your private life as is possible. I expect that, meanwhile, you will abstain from visiting this house or from making any attempt to see my ward. The delay shall not be longer than I can help, and if the issue be what your words assure me, there shall be no further opposition on my part, but, on the contrary, rejoicing and thankfulness."

He bowed low to his lordship and conducted him to the door of the counting-house, which led to the outer office. Christopher March was there; he looked up, and seeing Lord Eardeasley he changed colour. The alderman, walking slowly back, beckoned his chief clerk.

"You told me," he said, "that Lord Eardeasley fought a duel the other day."

"Yes. On account of some quarrel over cards, I heard," said Christopher.

"Where did you hear it?"

"It was the talk at Will's Coffee House. It was the talk at all the coffee-houses."

"So they make free with his name, then."

"They make free with every name," replied Christopher. "Yes, sir, they call him gamester, like his father; duellist, like his father; profligate, like his father. Of course, I know nothing except what I learn from these rumours."

"Ay, ay," the alderman mused. "No smoke without fire. It is, indeed, a perilous thing to be born to rank and title! We humble folk, Christopher, should thank heaven continually that we are not tempted, in the same way as our betters, to overstep

the bounds of the moral law. No dicing, no profligacy, for the sober London merchant."

I understood, presently, that I was not to see my lord until the alderman was perfectly satisfied as to his private character. This gave me no uneasiness, as I was so assured of my lover's goodness that I felt no pain on that score, and was only anxious for the time of probation to be passed.

Now a thing happened during the time when my lord was conferring with the alderman concerning his suit, which caused in my mind a little surprise, but which I thought no more of for the moment. It was this:

Outside the house my lord's servant, holding his horse, was waiting for his master. It was midsummer, and the evening was quite light. One does not in general pay much heed to men-servants, but this fellow caught my eye as I stood at the window and wondered what my guardian would say. When the mind is greatly excited a little thing distracts the attention for the moment and gives relief. Therefore I observed that the groom was a rosy-faced fellow, not very young, but fresh of cheek, who looked as if he had come up from the country only the day before, so brown and rustic was his appearance. In his mouth there was a straw, and his hair was of a bright red, of the kind called shock. While I was idly noting these matters I saw Christopher March standing by one of the posts of the street looking, as men will do, at the horse. Presently the groom looked in his direction and a sudden change came over him. For his rosy cheeks grew pale and his knees trembled.

Then Christopher started and slowly walked nearer the horse. He spoke to the man, and began stroking the animal's neck, as if he were talking about the horse. I knew, however, by some instinct, perhaps because I now suspected Christopher in everything, that he was not talking of the horse at all. But what could he have to say to a country bumpkin, the groom of Lord Eardeasley? I watched more narrowly. They were having some sort of explanation. Gradually my bumpkin seemed to recover from his apprehension and began to laugh at something Christopher said. And when the latter left him he nodded after him with a familiarity that was odd indeed.

Nor was that all. While I was still

wondering, partly how the alderman would take it, and partly who this servant could be that he should be an old acquaintance of Christopher March, another thing happened.

Alice, who had been out on some errand or other connected with my wants, was returning home. I saw the dear old woman slowly walking along the rough stones within the posts and transferred my thoughts easily enough to her and her fidelity. Why, I should have something that night to tell her worth the hearing! Then, all of a sudden—was I dreaming?—she, too, stopped short on sight of Thomas Marigold, which was, I learned afterwards, the fellow's name, and gazed upon him with an air of wonder and doubt. Then she, too, stepped out into the road and accosted him. Again that look of terror on his face; and again, after a few moments' talk, the look of relief.

What they said was this, as nurse told me afterwards. She touched his arm and said sharply: "What are you doing here?"

Then it was that he turned pale.

"What are you doing, Canvas Dick?"

Upon this he staggered and nearly dropped the reins.

"Who—who—who are you?" he asked.

"Never mind who I am. It is enough that I remember you and that you are Canvas Dick, and that what I know about you is enough to hang you any day."

Then his knees trembled and his jaws chattered for fear.

"It is nigh upon twenty years ago," he said, "since I heard that name. Too long for anybody to remember; and, besides, what is it you know? Perhaps, after all, you are only pretending."

"Then will this help you? A man and two boys, one of them fifteen years of age, that is yourself, and one six or seven years younger; a house in the Ratcliffe Highway; a great robbery of jewels, planned by a man and carried out by the boldness and dexterity of the two boys; and——"

"Hush!" whispered the man. "Don't say another word. Tell me who you are."

"They call me Alice," said nurse, looking him straight in the face. "That does not help you much. If you want to know more, I am nurse to Mistress Carellis, who lives in this house."

The man stared hard at her. "No," he said; "I can't remember who you are. Do you mean mischief, or do you mean halves?"

"First, what are you doing here?"

"I'm groom to Lord Eardesley." He grinned from ear to ear. "Who would think to find me as Tummas Marigold, honest Tummas, fresh from the country and grooming a nobleman's horse?"

"Groom to Lord Eardesley, are you? Oh!" and here a sudden light sprang into her face. "And what," she asked with a catch in her voice, "what became of the other boy?"

Honest Tummas hesitated. Then he replied, taking the straw out of his mouth and stroking the horse's neck: "Why—the other boy—the little 'un—he was hanged, he was, a matter of five year ago, on account of a girl's purse which he snatched in the fields behind Sadler's Wells."

"Oh!" she groaned, with a kind of despair. "It was the end to be looked for. It is the end of you all."

"Ay," he said; "give us a long day and plenty of rope. Then we climb the ladder gaily and kick off the shoes, game to the last."

She shook her head. "Well," she said, "now I know where to find you, I must use you for my own purposes. Come here, if you can, to-morrow evening at nine, and I will ask you certain questions. Be sure that you answer me truthfully."

"Then you don't mean mischief."

"If you serve me faithfully I will not harm you. If you dare to play false I will tell his worship, Alderman Medlycott, who you are, and give evidence against you at Newgate."

The man still hesitated. Presently, however, he held out his hand.

Honour, he said, was the only thing on which poor rogues and gentlemen of the road had to depend. And as he was satisfied that the good lady meant him no harm he would meet her the next day and take her to a quiet place in the fields where they could talk.

Here nurse laughed. "Thou art a villain indeed, Dick, but put that thought out of your mind. An old woman like me may be knocked o' the head, but suppose she writes a history of Thomas Marigold and lays it in a place where, after her murder, it might be found!"

Thomas laughed at this and protested that he was a most honest and harmless fellow, and that he would certainly come and answer all her questions.

That night, nurse, Jenny, and I had a long and serious talk together in my chamber; so long that when I went to

bed the watchman below was bawling, "Past two o'clock and a fine night." And all our talk was about my lord.

Nurse had foreseen what was coming; so had Jenny; so had everybody except the principal person concerned; nurse was sure that he was as good as he was brave and handsome, and only owned to some misgivings on the subject of wine, which, she said, when gentlemen exceeded their couple of bottles or so, was apt to fly to the head and make them quarrelsome. Then, because she was a very wise woman and knew the world, she began to tell me how different my life would be when I was a peeress.

"Oh!" said Jenny with a long sigh; "I wonder if Lysander is a peer. There is an air about him; he may be anything. Happy, happy, happy Nelly!" she cried, kissing me before she went to bed. "To marry such a man, and to gain a title and—oh! Lysander!"

She ran upstairs to her own room—and I began to undress.

"As for my lord's character," said nurse, "the alderman may make any enquiries he pleases. But I have a surer way to find the truth."

In two or three days she told me that she had learned all. Lord Eardesley was the most quiet and steady young man in London. He was studious, and read and wrote a great deal. In the evening he might be seen at a coffee-house or at the play. He went but little into society. He neither drank nor gambled. He attended church. His friends were chiefly gentlemen older than himself. No character could have been more satisfactory. I was in the highest spirits. I did not ask nurse how she came by her information, which I trusted entirely; and I waited impatiently for the alderman to tell me that all was well and that my lord was coming to the house as my betrothed lover.

It was bright sunny weather in early summer, I remember. The June and July of 1720 were full of splendid days in which every stone in the White Tower stood out clear and distinct and the river sparkled in the sunshine. They were all days of hope and joy.

Yet a week—a fortnight—passed, and the alderman made no sign. That is, he became more silent. He had an attack of gout upon him, though not a serious one. Yet it laid him up so that he could not get about.

One day I sought him in the counting-

house and asked him, seeing that he was alone, what was the meaning of his continued silence.

"My dear," he said, "I hope you will receive with resignation the news I have to give you. I would fain have spared you yet. But you force it from me."

"Go on quickly," I said. "Is Lord Eardesley ill?"

"More than that," he replied solemnly. "He is not worthy of your hand. He must not marry you."

He laid his kindly hand on mine to keep me quiet, while with sad eyes and sad voice he said what he had to say.

"He is a fortune-hunter, Elinor. He is a gamester; he is a wine-bibber; he is a profligate. Such as his father was, so is he; and the late Lord Eardesley was the most notorious of all the men about court twenty years ago. Such as his grandfather was, so is he; and the grandfather was the private friend and intimate of Charles the Second, Buckingham, and Rochester."

"How do you know, sir, that the son inherits the vices of the father? You speak from some envious and lying report."

"Nay, child, nay. I would I did. At first I only had my fears on account of idle reports which reached my ears; now, however, these reports are confirmed, and I know from a most certain, although a secret source, the whole private life of this young nobleman."

I was silent, bewildered.

"Consider for a moment, child, what a dreadful thing it is to be the wife of a gambler. At the beginning of an evening's play he hath a noble fortune, say, perhaps a hundred thousand pounds; at the close of the night all is gone—all gone. Think of that. The money which represents the patience of generations and the labours of hundreds of men all gone in a moment—in the twinkling of an eye, fooled away upon a chance. Why, girl, the profligate and the drunkard are better; they, at least, have some semblance of pleasure for their money; the gambler alone hath none."

"I do not believe," I said doggedly, "that my lord is a gambler at all." Then I remembered my nurse's discoveries. "Why, my dear alderman, I can prove you are wrong. I have my secret way of finding out, too, and my information is trustworthy. What do you say to that?"

"I say, Elinor," replied the alderman,

"that I cannot promise the hand of my late correspondent and honoured friend, Robert Carellis, to the young Lord Ear-desley, and that I have written to tell him so. Believe me, child, it was the hardest letter that I ever had to write. Now it is written."

"In a year or so I shall be of age," I said bitterly. "Then I shall not want your consent."

"Be it so," he replied. "Let me do my duty meanwhile as it becomes an honest man. Go, child. You are sorrowful, and with reason. The day will come when you will own that I have acted rightly."

I returned sadly. Jenny and madam knew what had been done, and we sat and cried together. Presently Jenny whispered, "What if Lysander should prove a gambler!"

"All the sorrow in the world," said madam solemnly, "comes from the extreme wickedness of man. What vice is so terrible as the love of gaming?"

I thought of her own passion for cards and wondered. I know, now, that people are never so virtuously indignant as when they denounce the sins to which they are themselves most prone.

Before night a letter was brought to me. It was from my lord.

"Dearest and best of women," he said, and I seemed to feel again the touch of his hand and to hear his soft and steady voice, so that my head swam and my heart sank, "I have received a letter from the alderman in which I learn that I possess such vices as unfit me for your hand. I know not, in very truth, what they are. Have courage, my dear, and cheer your Geoffrey with an assurance that you will trust him until he can clear away these clouds. I have promised that I will not intrude myself upon your house. My intention is to do nothing for a week or two and then to ask if the alderman will bring before me the reasons, clearly and certainly, for his bad opinion. So now farewell, and believe that I may be unworthy of so great a blessing as your love, but that I am not insensible to it and not ungrateful."

Had any girl so sweet a letter? Be sure I answered it with such silly words as I could command, telling him that I was altogether his, and that I firmly believed his innocence. And so, with lighter heart and with an assured hope in the future, I lay down to sleep on the first night after my lover was sent from me.

CHAPTER V. GETTING AT THE TRUTH.

It was hard upon us. We were at the mercy of two most hardened villains, who had no conscience, no fear, no gratitude, nor any principles at all of truth or virtue. One of them, of course, was the man who called himself Thomas Marigold; the other, as you will presently see, was Christopher March. So far, we knew no more against the alderman's factor than that he consented to receive Jenny's secret letters, advanced money to madam that she might pay her card debts, and knew all the little doings of the maids, so that he could threaten them into obedience. We were to learn before long that his power in the house, the confidence of his master, and his position, were all used for our own undoing, and that if seven devils possessed the spirit of Thomas Marigold, seventy times seven held that of Christopher March.

When the valet found that all the old woman wanted was authentic information on the private life of his master, he was greatly relieved, and swore that nothing but truth should pass his lips. And then he revealed so sweet a picture of a virtuous life, that the tears came into my eyes, and thankfulness with praise into my heart, when first I heard it from my nurse. An end, now, to those fears and anxieties which, in spite of faith in my lord, would yet sometimes darken my soul.

But one day, shortly after her first discovery of the servant, Alice found out the chief cause of the alderman's prejudice against my suitor. It was caused, indeed, by no other than Thomas Marigold himself, at the instigation or the bidding of Christopher March.

It was in the morning, and the door of the outer office was open. Alice, who was in the fore-yard, saw the groom walk in, a letter in his hand; he handed this with a reverence to Christopher, who in his turn carried it into the inner office to his master. Alice waited, hidden behind some bales, looked, and listened.

Then the alderman called his clerk.

"Christopher," he said with a groan, "this will not last long. Make up to-day his lordship's book."

"Does he want more money, sir?"

"Ay, lad—more money—every day more money. And for what? It grieves me sore that so well spoken and so frank a gentleman should be so ready to protest the thing which is not. Let me write to him."

Christopher left him and came back to the outer office, leaving the door open.

"Well, honest Thomas," he said, speaking loud, "how doth the noble lord, your master, this morning?"

"Bad, sir," said Thomas, shaking his honest shock of yellow hair.

"Speak up, you fool you," whispered Christopher. Then, loud again: "I am sorry, Thomas, to hear it."

"Drunk again last night, sir," the man went on, in louder key, "and at the gaming-table till three this morning. Such a life! 't would kill an ox."

"'Tis pity," Christopher said, glancing at the door of the counting-house, where his worship was listening to the talk, pen in hand. "Pity. Tell me, good man, couldst thou not, respectfully, put in a word of advice?"

"Nay, sir," said Thomas; "I am but a poor servant, with my character to keep."

"But you might try. Is his temper quick? Louder, this time."

"As for his temper," Thomas lifted up his voice and laughed, "'tis a word, and an oath, and a blow. One poor fellow, as honest and sober a creature as walks, his lordship disabled by breaking three ribs, so that he now goes with short breath, and is nothing but a stable help or does odd jobs, and lives on cabbage-stalks."

Christopher groaned.

"A spendthrift, a gamester, a brawler, and striker—what a character is this for a Christian man!"

Just then the alderman came out with the money in a little bag of brown sack-cloth.

"Be careful, good Thomas," he said. "There is the money, and here is a note for his lordship. Be careful; rogues are abroad. But yesterday se'nnight an honest clerk carrying two hundred pounds to a goldsmith in Lombard Street was tripped up, so that he fell and dropped the bag, which, when he recovered his feet, was gone."

"I will take care, sir," said Thomas. So he made a leg and came away. But outside the house he found Nurse Alice.

"So," she said, "I shall, after all, have to make an end of thee for a black-hearted and lying villain."

"Why, mother, what is the matter?"

"I have overheard all that you told Christopher March but now."

Thomas changed colour, but presently laughed and whistled.

"Phew!" he said. "Why, is that all?"

I have told you no lies, mistress. Be sure of that."

"Then why tell lies to him, for the alderman to hear?"

"That is a little business between me and the respectable Christopher, mother."

"You and Christopher? What has Christopher got to do with you?"

Now we all knew—nurse as well as the rest of us—that Christopher had been picked up out of the street; yet it did not occur to her that there could possibly be any acquaintance between the chief factor and this professed thief, so great is the power of fine clothes.

Thomas Marigold chewed his straw for a few moments before he answered.

"Suppose he wants the alderman to believe that Lord Eardesley is a lad of spirit and a gallant player, and suppose he pays me to say so; think you I should refuse his money?"

This seemed plausible, because the fellow never pretended to any kind of honesty. He would bear false witness, just as he would cheat, lie, and rob, for money.

"He a gamester!" continued Thomas, with a laugh of superiority. "A dull and tedious gentleman, who spends his time a-reading. Now, mother, I don't tell you no lies. You go on a trusting of me, and never mind what I tell the alderman to please that Christopher. Set him up!"

"But tell no more lies about Lord Eardesley. Mind, Dick, that is my last word. If I find you out again I shall act at once."

"Between the pair of you," said Thomas, scratching his head, "a man's fairly sped. Look you, mistress, for a spell I must do what he wants." He jerked his thumb over his left shoulder to indicate Christopher. "Curse him! You don't think I like him. Running another man's neck into the noose, and keeping his own out." This he said in a lower voice. "Only you wait a day or two, and I do no more service for Christopher March."

"A day or two." She thought very little mischief could be done in so short a time. "What service doth he require of you besides that of lying?"

"None," he replied quickly. "Oh, don't you go to think that I would do anything dishonest, mother. Come, now, a pore man may repent and turn over a new leaf."

"Ay," said Alice, "he may. But he seldom does. And you, Dick, are, I doubt not, a rogue in grain."

Nurse told me these things, and we talked them over, but without any present understanding how best to act.

Meantime, I received daily letters from my lord. In them he assured me of his passionate love, and exhorted me to patience and constancy. As regarded himself, we knew, he said, the worst of him; that he was of a verity exceeding poor, and possessed of little beside a barren mountain, a swamp, and a ruined castle in Wales which he could not sell; that he was not versed in those arts by which men become rich; that he had no party in politics; and that he could court no man's favour for place or pension. Indeed, he spoke of himself at all times with the true modesty which ever attends virtue.

Jenny knew that I was in communication with Lord Eardesley, and delighted in the contemplation of an amour which possessed the first element of intrigue—namely, that it was carried on in opposition to the will of my guardian. This reminded her of her own affair with Lysander, which seemed to progress slowly.

"Why," she asked once, "if the man really wants me, cannot he see my father and tell him so?"

"Because," I said, "that would be too commonplace a plan, and your lover would fain, being a poet, nourish his passion in rhymes a little longer—perhaps as long as your patience will allow. Pray, Mistress Jenny," I asked, "do you, too, reply with a madrigal, and send him a sigh in a sonnet."

Jenny blushed.

"Girls," she said, pursing up her pretty lips, "must not be asked the little secrets of their courtship. My Lysander is satisfied with the answers which I send him."

I was not, however, and it did not please me to be taking a part, however small, in an affair which was kept a secret from the good old alderman and from madam his wife, whose only fault was her love of cards. And the sequel proved that I had reason to be uneasy.

We resolved, after Alice had spoken with the groom, to let matters go on as they were for the time named by the man. We should have gone to the alderman immediately and told him all. But we knew little of the great web of plots with which this Christopher March had surrounded us all. We found it quite easy to understand that the man should wish the character of Lord Eardesley to be represented in the

blackest light; that was common revenge upon me. We also saw clearly that the alderman could easily be brought to believe that Christopher as well as himself had been deceived by the servant.

Now, two days after Thomas Marigold opened himself on the subject of Christopher March, he came voluntarily and frightened us out of our senses. First he said that he wanted the young lady to hear what he had to tell. When I was fetched, he told us that he was going to leave the service of his lordship in a day or two; that as he could do no more for us than he had done, he wished to tell us that Christopher March was a black-hearted villain, who would stick at nothing; that he hated Lord Eardesley, and would do him an ill turn if he could; that he would never rest till his lordship was ruined, and that, in the end, he would be the ruin of everyone who had benefited him.

Then Alice asked him how it was that he knew Christopher so well.

The fellow replied that perhaps he would tell her when next they met. Meantime, he said, he had warned us, and his mind was clear. "While I was with his lordship," he added, "no harm should be done to him; but after I leave his service I cannot answer for him."

Then we began to look at each other and to tremble, and I lined the man's palm with five pieces of gold for his honesty.

"I almost wish," he said, putting up the money, "that I had come to your ladyship first. Anyhow, them lies about his lordship are soon set right."

So he went away, and we began to consider what was best to be done.

"The man will tell us," said Alice, "no more than he chooses. If he goes away to-morrow from his lordship's service, I shall not see him again. That is very certain. How can we prove anything against Christopher?"

Nothing could be proved, but it would be well to set Lord Eardesley on his guard and to inform him of what had passed. We decided, at length, that we would go ourselves to his lodgings on the morrow, and lay before him the whole matter.

So far, very little mischief had been done. The character of a man of honour and virtue had been maligned, but only in the ear of the alderman, who would easily be led back to his former confidence. That is what we said to each other. Alas! we little knew all the mischief that had been

done, and was, even then, on the point of discovery.

While we talked, the alderman sent me an invitation to converse with him.

He was suffering from another attack of gout—an unfortunate thing in all respects, because it prevented him from getting about and making those enquiries into the private life of my lord, as he had promised. He was now, being dependent on the reports of Christopher March and the man, in great mental trouble about Lord Eardesley.

"I do not disguise from myself, my ward," he said, "that an alliance with a nobleman of his exalted rank (albeit his estates are small) would have been gratifying to your lamented father, as it would, under other circumstances, to myself. Yet the profligacy of the young man is such that no hope can be entertained of his amendment before his final ruin overtakes him."

"You know of his profligacy," I replied, "only by report and rumour. Have you asked any of his friends about him?"

"His friends, child? I am a plain London citizen, and have no acquaintance with noblemen. Besides, they would be, doubtless, all of a tale. But I have clear proof. Not only hath his man confessed to Christopher March, in my hearing, that his master gambles, but to pay his losses he sends to me sometimes daily, sometimes thrice a week, for money. Very soon, sooner than his lordship thinks, there will be an end. Doth he hope, then, to send your hundred thousand pounds after his own hundreds? My dear, should I be an honest guardian did I counsel thee to marry a gamester?"

The good old man! It was the last time that I received any admonition from him at all, almost the last time that I ever saw him; because his troubles began almost on that very day—with my own, and Jenny's, and my lord's, and even my nurse's.

I confess I was staggered at first. I must needs believe in my lover's truth and fidelity. What has a girl to trust in if she cannot trust her lover? Yet that he should send nearly every day to the alderman for money when he had so little left, and when his lodgings were so mean and ill-proportioned to his rank—why, what did that mean?

I went to my nurse and consulted with her. She, too, began to fear that the man might have played us false, and that the

information which he gave to Christopher March was true.

"You must see him at once, my dear," she said. "There must be no time lost. You must see him somehow by himself, and speak to him, and ask him what it means. Let me consider."

I could not ask him to the house, because he had promised the alderman that he would not come without his permission. It would be best, on all accounts, to seek him secretly.

Then my nurse proposed a thing which, I own, I should have been afraid by myself to undertake.

It was our evening for cards. Alice advised me to make some excuse, while madam was entertaining and receiving her visitors, to slip out of the room. I was to choose a time when the tables were laid, and the ladies were in the first height and interest of the game. Thus I should not be missed. I was to run upstairs, where she would be in waiting for me with dominos and hoods, in which she and I would take coach and go ourselves in search of his lordship. In case of necessity, I was to take Jenny into confidence.

I confess my heart beat when I thought of this adventure. For a young girl to go out alone, or protected only by an old nurse, was a perilous thing, indeed.

Still, we were not going into the country or as far as the fields of Knightsbridge, and we were not going to be out late at night. And then there was the necessity of seeing my lord as soon as possible. In fine, I consented to go. Glad am I now and thankful for a resolution which, if anything could have been, was an inspiration from Heaven, and served to save, out of the general wreck, at least one pair of happy lovers.

This, then, was decided. Nurse went away to buy the masks and hoods. I stayed at home and went on with my usual work.

At three we dined as usual, the alderman being laid up, as I have said, with gout.

At four we all walked into the City to Cheapside, where we bought some ribbons and stuffs, and presently returned; we two girls being both silent and depressed, but neither noticing, till later on, the trouble of the other. At six o'clock some visitors called, and we had a dish of tea. The time seemed long before our guests arrived and the cards were laid out. I excused myself from playing, and after

they were all sat down, and madam's attention was entirely occupied with the game, I slipped out of the room, and found my nurse waiting for me with the masks and the hoods. I did not tell Jenny anything, and, indeed, thought nothing about her at all.

The hood was so long that it hid the whole of my dress and covered my head, while the mask, made of black silk, covered and concealed my face, except the eyes. It was impossible for anyone to recognise me. Alice was attired in exactly the same fashion; and, thus disguised, we slipped down the stairs and were out of the door without anyone having the least suspicion of my absence.

It was just striking half-past eight. We took a coach on Tower Hill, and ordered the driver to proceed to Bury Street, where Lord Eardeley had lodgings. We proposed driving to the very door of the house, so as to encounter as little risk as possible from fellows who think it no shame to address a lady who may be unprotected.

The streets were full, and the progress of the coach was slow. In Fleet Street the driver got down to fight a drayman who refused to make way or to go on. The battle lasted for ten minutes, while we trembled within. The drayman defeated, his horses were drawn out of the way, and we went on. It was a rainy evening and dark; though in the middle of summer there was a high wind, and I remember how, to the noise and fury of the combatants and their friends, was added the dreadful shrieking and groaning of the great signs which swung over our heads. Surely shopkeepers might find a more convenient method of advertising their goods than by hanging out a sign which is so heavy that it threatens to drag down the front of the house, and so noisy that it keeps one awake at night, and so surrounded by the other great signs that passers-by cannot see it.

When we got through Temple Bar we made better way, and after a little further delay at Charing Cross, we finally arrived safely at Bury Street.

But his lordship was abroad, nor did the maid know with any certainty when he would return. We sent for his servant.

When Thomas saw us, he became suddenly pale.

"Man!" cried nurse angrily. "What ails him? One would think he had never set eyes on us before."

He recovered, but showed such hesita-

tion in his manner as made me sure that there was something wrong.

"You would see my lord?" he said. "His lordship is abroad this evening."

"Where can we find him, Thomas?" I asked. "Our business with him is urgent."

He hesitated again.

"I know where he is," he replied at last. "He went to the Royal Chocolate House, in St. James's Street, intending to go afterwards to the Theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields. But he met some friends, who have taken him instead to Covent Garden, to the house kept by one Dunton."

"What is the house kept for?" I asked. "And can ladies get in?"

"It is kept for music, dancing, supper, and gambling. Ladies can go in if they have the pass-word."

"But how can we get the pass-word? Can we not send for my lord?"

Thomas shook his head. Then he considered, and presently said that he might be able to get us the pass-word, because the porter was a friend of his. He also assured us that though the company was not entirely what I might wish, we need be under no apprehensions of ill-usage or insult; and that ladies, especially court ladies, often put on a hood and mask, and so disguised, went to this house, or to Cupid's Gardens, or the Folly on the Thames, for a frolic—where they could see without being seen, and watch their lovers or their husbands.

Truly, it seemed a chance. If my lord was what this creature had told his confederate, now was the time to find him out; if not, then we had proof to the contrary in our own hands.

So, with Thomas on the box beside the coachman, we drove to Covent Garden—oh! the crowded, dirty place, with its piles of cabbage-stalks!—and presently stopped at a door where there was no light. We got down and told the coachman to wait for half an hour. Then Thomas knocked gently, and the door was opened by one of the biggest and most ferocious-looking fellows I ever saw. After a little parley, he let us in, and called up the stairs, whereupon another tall bully appeared, bearing a light.

"This way, ladies," he said. "Up the stairs. Have no fear. There is goodly company here to-night."

There was, indeed, a goodly company. Many ladies were present, all of them, like ourselves, with hoods and masks; some

alone, but mostly in pairs. They walked about the rooms, which were en suite, and all brilliantly lit with wax candles, talking incessantly to the men, some of whom they addressed by name. The men seemed to consist almost of the very rich class, so splendid were their laced ruffles and their coats; and upon their faces there was mostly that assured look which one never finds except among gentlemen whose position and rank cannot be questioned.

In the first room there was a band of music, which was playing a minuet as we entered. Four couples were dancing. I looked hurriedly to see if my lord was among them, but he was not. It was a foolish girl's jealousy. Why should he not dance, if the fancy took him? We passed on, my nurse and I, while many a curious look was turned upon us, to the next room. Here there was supper laid out, with bottles of Port, Malmsey, and Bordeaux in plenty, apparently free for all comers. But no one as yet was eating or drinking. Then we came to the third room, where there were tables set with cards and counters, and parties were sitting at them playing ombre and quadrille, just as madam at home, at that same time, was playing with her friends. Lastly, there was the fourth room. And this was crowded. For here they were gambling indeed. At a table sat one who held the bank; he played against all; a pile of gold was before him; a man stood on either side of him raking in the money and paying it out; round the table were clustered a group of players, men and women. Several of the women had discarded their masks and thrown back their hoods; one or two were young and pretty, most of them were old or middle-aged; but all alike, men and women, had stamped upon their faces the same eager look—that of the gambler. It is anxious, it is expectant, it is hopeful, yet it is despairing, because at heart there is no gamester but knows that in the end ruin awaits him.

I looked hurriedly round the tables. Lord Eardeley was not playing at any. But I saw him presently standing beside one of the doors, in company with a gentleman, not young, whose star and ribbon, as well as his splendid apparel, spoke his high rank.

I moved nearer to him and listened. He looked handsome and noble, and there was no trace in his clear eyes and lofty brow of the profligacy, drink, and gambling with which my guardian charged him.

"Come," said his companion. "Shall we, for half an hour, try fortune?"

But Lord Eardeley shook his head.

"I think," he said, "that my House has had enough of the green table. You know that I never play."

His friend ceased to press him, and joined the throng at the table.

Lord Eardeley watched the play a little, and then, as if it had little interest for him, he began to walk through the rooms.

I would have followed him, but Alice touched my arm and pointed to another figure at the table.

Heavens! It was Christopher March. He was attired in a brave show of scarlet and silk, with a sword at his side, a wig fully equal to any other in the room, and laced ruffles very fine indeed. And he was gaming with a sort of madness. I watched him lose time after time, yet he never ceased to play; his eyes were lit with a fire of anxiety; his cheek was flushed; his hands trembled; he played on with a sort of rapture. Once he turned round suddenly and saw Lord Eardeley. Then he started and half sprang from his seat; but the voice of the banker called him back, and he turned round again, preferring play to revenge.

"What do you make of this, Alice?" I asked.

"This will be something new to tell the alderman," she said. "Do not let his lordship go before you can speak with him."

One moment I waited, because I saw another familiar face. There sat Jenny's Lysander.

He was winning. His sharp and mean little features were full of satisfaction as he raked in the money. He seemed, too, to be winning a great deal.

"Jenny," I thought, "this will be something new for you. Lysander gambles."

Then I hastened after Lord Eardeley. The black look of hatred which shot out of Christopher's eyes when they turned upon his enemy, as he, perhaps, thought him, warned me that the man Thomas had spoken the truth, and that Christopher would do him a hurt, if he could. I did not want to see my lord mixed up in a vulgar brawl at a common gaming-house, got up by a City clerk.

Alice it was who accosted him.

"My lord," she said, in a low voice, "this is not a wholesome air for you. Better leave it."

He looked surprised. He did not recognise her voice.

"Why not wholesome, fair incognita?"

"Because, first, Mistress Carellis would not like it."

"What do you know of Mistress Carellis?"

"Come with me," she said, "and I will show you—what it will please your lordship to see."

I had descended the stairs, and was waiting. We went out, all three together. I got into the carriage and took off my mask.

"Nelly!" he cried, springing into the coach after me. "My Nelly! Here!"

"It is for your sake," I said. "There is mischief brewing against you."

"What mischief?"

"First tell me—nay, my lord, leave my hands alone. This is serious. Tell me why it is that you send your servant to the alderman thrice a week for money?"

He stared at this.

"Thrice a week! Nelly, I have not asked the alderman for money these three months."

This was a pretty discovery of villainy. Then, who had forged the letters and the drafts?

The man who brought them?

Alice said he could not read. We looked at each other, and I whispered, "Christopher March."

On the way back, my lord sitting beside me, I told him how we had detected his servant giving false information at the suborning of Christopher March; how the man had warned us against him, and how the alderman was grieved at paying those daily drafts.

"As for the drafts," said my lord, "there has been some grievous forgery. I will call on the alderman to-morrow. As for the factor, Christopher March, why does he seek my injury?"

"Because—oh, my lord! indeed, I gave him no encouragement—because he dared to fall in love with—a person whom you have thought worthy of your own love."

The drivers cursed and swore at each other; the rain fell; the sign-boards groaned; the people crowded and pressed in the narrow ways; the link-boys ran by shouting.

I heeded not the noise or crowd; for I had taken my love away from the place where his enemy might harm him, and he

was sitting beside me, and I was ready to clear his character.

We parted at the alderman's door. The adventure had taken altogether about two hours; and, on my return to the party, I discovered that, as I had hoped, my absence had not been remarked. Only two hours, and yet how much had happened! But who could tell that my cheek was glowing with my lover's kiss, and my eyes were bright with the fruition of hope deferred? The ladies were playing as eagerly as the company I had left at Dunton's house in Covent Garden.

I was greatly excited and out of myself, as they say, by what had happened. Yet I could not but observe that Jenny had red eyes, as if she had been crying. So I sat down beside her and took her hand in mine.

"What is it, Jenny, my dear?" I asked.

She looked at me sorrowfully, and her eyes filled with tears again. Then she turned away her head and did not answer.

After our guests departed, Jenny ran away quickly, so that her mother might not notice her eyes. But madam was too full of the various fortunes of the evening to heed her, and she kept me waiting half an hour while she fought the battles over again.

CHAPTER VI. A DAY OF FATE.

THE morrow was the day of fate. Could one read the future each day would be a day of fate, full of issues important and eventful. But just as we cannot foresee the future so we forget the lesser links in the chain of the past. Methinks he who would prophesy must first be able to remember.

In the morning Alice began to talk about the forged drafts. She said that considering everything, how Christopher March was a gambler, how he hated my lord, and how he knew, or had some power over, Thomas Marigold, she could have no doubt that he, and none but he, was the forger. Indeed, who else could it be? But the difficulty would be to bring it home to him and prove it.

My lord was to call upon the alderman at twelve. A little before noon I went to the counting-house and found my guardian sitting, as usual, before books and papers, but with his foot still bandaged. His gout had not left him.

"My dear," he said kindly, "I am always glad to see you here. Sit down and let us talk. Nay, the papers can wait. Did you have a merry party last night?"

"Why, truly, sir," I replied, "I do not play at cards. But the ladies seemed to enjoy their game."

"Ay," he said, with a cloud over his face. "Those who won doubtless enjoyed their game. Do not play cards, girl. Never play cards. You have an example in"—I thought he was going to say, "my own wife," but he did not—"in my Lord Eardesley."

"It is of him that I would speak with you this morning, sir," I said.

"Nay, Elinor. There lacks but a little while, a twelvemonth or so, of the time when you will pass out of your minority. Let us leave your spendthrift lord till then. I have said my say and cannot alter it."

"Nevertheless, sir," I said, laughing, for I could very well afford to be merry now; "nevertheless, I prophesy that you will alter your say before another half-hour is over."

"Say you so, lass? Why, then, let us wait. Where lies the wind now?"

"Lord Eardesley is coming to see you, sir, at twelve of the clock. You will not refuse to see him."

"Not if he brings with him anything beyond his word."

"Alas! sir. Can you not trust the word of a nobleman?"

The alderman shook his head but said nothing. And just then, as the clocks began to strike twelve, and there arose the mighty clamour which betokens the dinner-hour of all the craftsmen, lightermen, dock labourers, boatmen, porters, and carters who throng about Tower Hill, Christopher March opened the door and announced the arrival of his lordship. I snatched a glance at Christopher's face; nothing that would recall the eager, frantic gambler of last night; a calm, sober air such as befits an honest factor with a conscience at ease. Yet I thought his cheek was pale and his eyes anxious.

"I hope," said my lord, "that all is well with my old friend."

"No," replied the alderman; "all is ill. I doubt if we shall ever make things well again between your lordship and myself. Yet my ward will have it that you have an important communication to make."

"Mr. Alderman," Lord Eardesley said, "I have many things to say. But first, because Mistress Elinor Carellis has told me a thing which surprised me greatly, let me know when last you honoured any draft of mine."

"Surely," said the alderman, "yesterday morning, and the day before, and twice last week, and I think three times the week before last——"

"Stop. The last draft I sent to you for cash was more than two months ago."

"What!" cried the alderman. "Say that again."

"I repeat that the last time I drew upon you for money was more than two months ago."

"Then there has been villainy. Elinor, go call Christopher March. Christopher," he cried, in quick and peremptory tones, "my lord's book, and quickly; and all his latest drafts, all his drafts of the last six months. Quick, I say."

The clerk obeyed, and brought the books, standing beside his master as if ready to answer questions. But his hands trembled and his eyes were dropped.

The alderman seemed changed suddenly. He, the most gentle of men, was now rough, quick, and even rude.

"Now, my lord," he said, snatching the drafts from Christopher's hands. "We shall see. Your man brought the drafts and received the money. Where is he?"

"Gone. He went away, without notice, last night."

"That is suspicious. Could he write?"

"No. He was a common country lad, out of Gloucestershire, he said."

"Well, then, here are the drafts, which we duly honoured and cashed. Look at them all, my lord."

Lord Eardesley looked them through. The earlier ones he laid aside. Those dated during the last eight weeks he put together in a separate pile.

"There," he said, "are the forged drafts."

They represented the sum of two thousand and fifty pounds, so that the monies belonging to Lord Eardesley still in the alderman's hands now amounted to no more than three hundred pounds and some odd shillings.

"I wonder," said my lord, showing one to the alderman, "that so clumsy a cheat was not suspected."

"Why, indeed," the alderman was looking at the paper, "it is not like your lordship's writing. Christopher, you re-

ceived and opened the letters. Had you no suspicion?"

"I looked at the signature, sir," replied the clerk; "and if you will look at that carefully, I think you will agree with me that it is so like his lordship's writing as to deceive anyone."

"Let me look," I cried. "My lord, I have certain letters of yours by me which no one, I think, will deny to be your own." In fact there were then lying in my bosom a collection of the sweetest letters ever received by love-sick maid. I pulled them forth, and, taking one, opened it and laid it beside the draft. "There, my guardian," I said, "compare the two."

There was no comparison possible, because in the forged draft the body of the document was not in the least like Lord Eardesley's handwriting, and the signature alone had been imitated, but this so clumsily that even the slightest acquaintance with his hand should have been enough to detect the forgery."

"Why," said the alderman, "this is palpable. This is so gross a forgery that even— Christopher March, hast thou taken leave of thy senses?"

"With submission, sir," said Christopher, speaking slowly and steadily, "am I to blame? I am imperfectly acquainted with my lord's hand; I received the letters from his servant; I opened them to save you trouble——"

"Ay, ay," said the merchant. "You did your best, Christopher, no doubt. The house has been robbed, not you, my lord. The house must bear this loss."

"Surely, my kind old friend," Lord Eardesley went on, "you might have asked yourself for what purpose I wanted these constant supplies, for what extravagances and follies they were required."

"Alas! I knew too well. They were wanted, I thought, to repair your losses at the gaming-table."

Then I spoke.

"The alderman has been greatly deceived, Geoffrey, in this as in other things. I know that your servant, Thomas Marigold, suborned by a person who was also, I believe, the forger of these drafts"—here I glanced at Christopher, and his eyes, full of a fearful curiosity, met mine for a moment before they fell again—"reported in the alderman's hearing, day after day, tales of drunkenness, gambling, and other wickednesses such as gentlemen practise who forget their Christian profession. And these stories he invented to suit the

purpose of this other man with whom he shared the proceeds of the crime."

"We seem to be surrounded by villains," said the alderman. "Speak, Christopher, what do you know?"

"Nothing, sir. I suspected nothing. It is true that the man told me in your hearing the stories of his lordship's alleged profligacy."

"He did. But those other reports. Why, Christopher, 'twas you yourself brought them."

Lord Eardesley drew himself up, and turned towards the clerk, who was trying his utmost to preserve an appearance of composure.

"You—you spread reports about me? Pray, Master Clerk, what business have you with me?"

"None, my lord. Nor am I a carrier of tales. I but answered a question of the alderman's, and told him what had been said at a coffee-house."

Then my lord recollected what I had told him, that it was none other than Christopher March himself who had suborned his man, and was proposing to do himself some harm.

"Well," he said, turning it off for the time, "there will be something to be said another time between you and me, Master March."

"Mr. Alderman," I struck in, fearful that the villain should be too soon accused of the crime, "let us address ourselves to the forgery. The servant was but the tool. We want to find the instigator and principal." The papers were lying close to the hand of the clerk. I snatched them up. "We must find the man who wrote the drafts; it matters little who presented them. I venture to advise that the alderman initials every one of them, and that my lord keeps them, and carries them about. It will not be difficult," I said this with an air of confidence, "to find out the man who wrote them."

"You are right, child," said the alderman. "I will not keep these papers; Lord Eardesley shall have them, with my name to each. My lord, I confess to you that my opinion was formed by the bad reports brought to me by Christopher March, and by the tales I heard your servant tell, and by the rapidity with which your fortune was wasting away."

"Nay," said Geoffrey; "surely you should have known me better, who have known me so long. Do I look like a drunkard? Hath my face the open and

manifest signs, legible to all the world, which belong to the man who drinks much wine? Believe me, sir, on the honour of a peer, that I have never in my life touched cards or played with dice."

"I believe you," said the alderman, holding out his hand.

"If," interrupted Christopher, in a strange strident voice, "if Mistress Elinor thinks it easy to find the forger, she would perhaps kindly advise us which way to begin, for I confess I am at fault."

"You have to find out, Christopher March, in the first place a man who thinks he has an object to gain in robbing or inflicting other injury on Lord Eardesley; he must, next, be one who had some previous friendship with the servant; he must be a man in want of money for his own secret vices; he must be wicked enough to conceive and bold enough to carry out so vile a plot. Indeed, I could lay my hand on such a man."

He lifted his face, and tried to meet my gaze, but he could not.

"All this helps nothing," he said.

"Well, Christopher," said the alderman.

"Go now, and think, or consult a lawyer—leave me with his lordship."

Christopher took his departure. I longed to tell the alderman what we knew, where we had seen his clerk, and what we suspected; but I refrained. I thought the next day would do as well. Besides, my lord turned the talk away.

"Let us leave the forgeries awhile," he said. "Mr. Alderman, I have to speak of other things. Again I have the honour to ask your consent to marry your ward. You have seen that the worst accusations are false. Believe that the others are as unfounded and as slanderous."

"I cannot choose," said the alderman, "but believe. My lord, as the guardian of Mistress Elinor, I confide her to your care and protection."

He sat upright in his chair, and cleared his voice. We knew what was coming. On any occasion of ceremony and importance a London citizen loves to deliver an appropriate discourse. It is a goodly custom and laudable, inasmuch as it enables every man to magnify his own office and dignity. Now, the best safeguard against vice is, methinks, respect of oneself.

"My Lord Eardesley," he began, "and Elinor Carellis, my ward. The condition of matrimony (wherein the bond of love should be, from each to either, equal and lasting; and wherein the one should be well

assured of the other's virtue and goodness) hath been specially designed by Heaven for the solace and happiness of the human race. Wherefore, if——"

Here he was interrupted by an admonition in the great toe, which demanded all his attention. He stopped, turned purple and even black in the cheeks, and presently thundered forth a volley of oaths, which seemed to linger about the corners of the room, and echoed from the walls, so that it was like a very tempest. When he recovered, the thread of his discourse was lost, and he could only murmur, lying back on his pillows, exhausted with his efforts: "Take her, my lord, and make her happy." Then he whispered, with the least little nod of his head in the direction of the door: "And never let her play cards."

Thus we were betrothed.

Alas! This day, which should have been the first of many happy days, proved the beginning of our calamities.

We left the alderman, and sought madam, to whom I presented my lord as my accepted lover. The good lady, who, in all but her passion for cards, was a most kind and unselfish woman, rejoiced with us, and wished us happiness, and then, by means of a pack of cards, told us our fortunes. The most important part of it was, that after surmounting certain obstacles and checks placed in our way by a dark man, we should undertake a long voyage, and meet with great prosperity ever after.

It is, indeed, strange how the chance disposition of foolish cards enables some to read the future. The dark man could be none other than Christopher. We had, immediately after our betrothal, such checks and hindrances as fall to the lot of few; we did make a long voyage; and we have enjoyed prosperity and increase. Yet it is against the divine ordinance to enquire of any oracle, and I cannot but think the punishment of witches in New England, of which so much has been said, was necessary, albeit severe.

Then Jenny came downstairs, and we had to tell her. She was very pale, and had dark rims round her eyes, with traces of tears. She fell on my neck and kissed me, and burst out crying.

"Why, Jenny, foolish child," I said; "why do you cry?"

"Oh, Nelly! I cry because I am glad for you and sorry for myself. Nelly, Nelly, I am a wretch."

I could not understand, but it was not the time to press her, and nothing would serve my lord but that we should all drive to his lodgings, there to dine, and afterwards to get such amusements as the town at that season afforded. Jenny excused herself, saying that she had a headache, and could not go. We left her at home, therefore, and took a coach—madam, my lord, and I. On the way we stopped at a goldsmith's, where Geoffrey presented me with a beautiful emerald ring, and so to his lodgings in Bury Street.

Our entertainment was simple; the dinner being sent over from a tavern. Madam was in high spirits, and talked and laughed. I was glad of this, because my heart was too full for talk. After dinner we walked in the park, which was crowded with a collection of ladies of quality, beaux, gallants, and courtiers, with ragamuffins, pickpockets, girls selling flowers, women with curds-and-whey, soldiers, grave clergymen, solemn physicians, members of parliament, beggars, and common thieves. Everybody looked at us as we passed along with the stream of people. I was afraid that there was something wrong with my dress, for, indeed, though I had been in London so long, I was still somewhat distrustful when we went abroad. But Geoffrey said they stared at my face and figure, not at my dress. Many other pleasant things he said that day, which I pass over. After the promenade in the park, which I should have liked better had I been alone with him, we went back to his lodgings; here a dish of tea was waiting for us; and after tea we went to the theatre in the Haymarket. The play was—but I forget play, actors, and everything. I sat in a dream, thinking of what had happened; wondering if it were true, and fearing that I did not possess attractions enough to fix the affections of so handsome, gallant, and noble a lover as he who sat by my side.

At last it ended, and we were on our way home. The streets were crowded with people—link-boys ran up and down; the coaches rumbled along the way; we passed out of the broad Strand into narrow Fleet Street, and in a few minutes were set down in Tower Hill, at the door of the alderman's house. My lord paid the man, who drove off, and we stood at our door waiting for it to be opened. It was about half-past eleven, or a little before midnight; the sky was clear, and there was no darkness—only twilight.

At that hour Tower Hill is comparatively deserted; there was no one in the street. Yet in the darkness of a pent-house higher up the Hill I saw the forms of two men lurking, and a thought of uneasiness crossed my heart. But only for a moment.

Madam went in as the door was opened; we stood outside, and my lord took my hand and held it.

"Will my Nelly, my Princess of Virginia, always trust her love?" he whispered.

"Always and always," I replied. "Oh, who am I, I ask again and again, that you should love me so?"

"You are the dearest girl in all the world," he said, kissing my hands. "You are my own sweet Nelly."

He drew me towards him by both my hands and kissed my lips. Then he tore himself away and left me. The maid—I hoped she had not seen that lover-like farewell—held the door for me. I stepped forward; then, moved by the impulse of love, I turned my head to catch a last glimpse of my betrothed. He was striding with manly step over the stones. When he was just at the turning which led from Tower Hill, I saw the two men whose figures I had discerned beneath the pent-house rush out upon him, and I saw the gleam of steel in their hands. I rushed down the steps and along the road, crying, "Geoffrey, Geoffrey! Help, help! They will murder him!"

It was my voice, thank God for ever, which saved his life, else he had been stabbed in the back. He turned, saw his assailants, and in a moment drew his sword and was on guard. As I still ran and cried I saw his sword flashing in the moonlight, and one man fell; but his foot slipped as I reached him. I threw myself before him, and, while my arms were thrown about his neck, the thrust which would have pierced him to the heart pierced me instead.

That moment will live for ever in my memory. As the cruel cold steel ran through me I saw that the wounded man, whose mask had fallen off, was Thomas Marigold; and the other, my murderer, whom I knew, although he was masked, by his figure, his dress, his voice—as he cried out on seeing me—was none other than Christopher March. He fled at once, and was lost in the dark and winding lanes of the city.

They carried me home, Geoffrey and the maid, and sent for a surgeon. The

alderman and madam wept and cried over me; Alice had me carried to my own bed, and cut away my dress—that bravery of silver gauze and crimson satin and lace in which I had been so fine all day—and tried to staunch the blood, while my lord bathed my face and whispered prayers until the surgeon came and turned him out.

He was a pompous man in an immense wig. After he had probed the wound and applied some lint, and instructed the nurse in other matters, he descended and found the whole household, servants and all, waiting to hear his judgment.

"She will live," he said, speaking like an oracle, "through the night, I doubt not. In the morning inflammation will set in and she will die."

They all burst into tears and lamentations.

"Where is Jenny?" cried madam. "Go call her, one of you. Let her come down and weep with us."

"Nay," said the alderman; "what use? Let her sleep on. As for my lord and me, we will wait with this learned gentleman. Do you all go to bed."

But no one went to bed that night.

Presently there was a knocking at the door. It was a pair of constables bringing with them a wounded man.

"He will be brought here, sir," they explained to the alderman. "We know not if your worship knows him."

"Know him!" cried Lord Eardesley, "Why it is my own man, Thomas. You, too, among the murderers?"

"Yes, my lord," said the man, whose face was pale with death. "I'd rather help you to die than see myself hung. There was all them forgeries in your pocket."

"Who was the forger?" asked his master.

The fellow was silent.

"Man!" said the alderman; "you are on the brink of eternity. Let it be reckoned as proof of a death-bed repentance that you give up the name of the forger."

Thomas laughed. At the point of death he laughed. But it was laughter without merriment.

"Honour among thieves," he said. "Let me see the woman, Mistress Carellis's nurse. I want to speak with her."

"She would not leave my bed. But the doctor promised that if a change took place she should be called. And then she came slowly downstairs."

"Alas!" she cried, "that you should

be a murderer, and that you should murder the innocent young lady."

"I did not," he said. "I tried to kill my lord, to save my own neck. And he hath killed me. So am I sped."

"And the other man! Who was he?"

"Tell me first," he said, "who you are, and how you know me for Canvas Dick?"

She bent over him and whispered:

"I was once, long ago, a woman of your gang. I was Kate Collyer."

"Ay!" he murmured, his face feebly lighting up. "I remember you now, Kate Collyer!"

"And who was the other murderer?" she repeated.

"He was the forger, of course; he was the villain who pushed me on; he threatened to betray me; he was the man who took all the money; he spent it where he spent his master's money—in the gaming-house, and lost it there. He has boasted to me that he has ruined you all—he is—"

"Christopher March?" asked my nurse.

"You've guessed it, Kate. But you needn't be too proud of it, now you do know it, although he is your own son."

"My son! Christopher March my son!"

"Tis true, Kate. Little Jack Collyer that was: the cleverest and safest young thief that ever cracked a crib, even before you was lagged, and cleverer since. Your son, Kate. Lift up my head." His voice sank. "I've cheated Tyburn tree. Yes, I never—could—abide—the—thought—of that—that cart—and—that—dance upon nothing."

His head fell back, and he was dead. Alice took no heed; her hands were clenched, and she murmured:

"The hand of God is heavy upon me. My son! my son!"

CHAPTER VII. BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH.

THIS, indeed, was a most dreadful discovery. Yet it was no time for poor Alice to sit and weep or to think about her son. She had that gift, denied to men, and granted only to women, which enables them to repress and drive back for the time one grief so that it shall not hinder the discharge of the present duty. Therefore my nurse forced herself to leave the matter for the time, and, after calling to the constables to remove the dead man, she mounted the stairs and returned to the chamber where I lay unconscious and under the surgeon's hands.

The wound was right through the body

from the back under the left shoulder, and when I recovered from the swoon I began to feel such tortures of pain as I did not believe were possible for the body to endure and yet to live. For the passage made by the sword was like a rod of red-hot iron.

All that night I lay and suffered, while Alice watched by the bedside and my lord, the alderman, and madam remained below, waiting for news. The news which the surgeon brought from time to time was the worst possible. "Inflammation," he said, "has set in, with violent pain. It should be followed by fever: that will produce delirium: death will follow."

At break of day, when I was a little quieter, Alice went to the still-room and came back bearing a basket full of simples. I was not yet light-headed, and I knew that she was going to take me out of the doctor's hands and nurse me herself with the herbs in which all country women put their trust. She turned the contents of the basket upon the table.

"Patience, my dear, patience. Oh! patience for a little while, my pretty lamb. Here is St. John's wort, and here is knapweed to lay in the open wound, and plantains to close it up, and blood-wort if the knapweed fails; and here is self-heal, but I doubt if it is strong enough; and comfrey, which never fails, and strong kiss-me-quick. Courage, my pretty. We have here what is better than all the pothecarys' shops."

Then I found that the pain was growing greater than I could bear, and I called upon my nurse to tear off the bandage and let me die. And then some good angel came to my bedside and helped me up and carried me away—far—far away—to sweet Virginia.

I was back in the old plantation. It was Sunday morning, and we were all going to church—my father, my mother, my nurse, and I, the convicts standing in a line to let his honour pass: the negroes chattering and grinning, who understood, poor souls! little enough of the service they were going to hear, but yet could sing the psalms, having sweet voices, and ears which caught the tune correctly; and in the pine-wood pulpit was our convict-chaplain, proclaiming aloud that we—meaning everybody outside his honour's pew—were all miserable sinners.

It was many days before my reason came back to me, and then I was weak and helpless indeed; though my nurse

multiplied her infusions of galyngale for internal strength, and tea of thyme for headache, and snakeroot to keep me safe from infection, which is fatal to poor creatures just recovering from illness. Would I could describe the joy and thankfulness which I felt when, on coming to my senses, I found my lover by my bedside, and saw by his eyes that he had been weeping for me.

No one else was in the room. He thought I was sleeping. When he saw that my eyes were open he thought I was still in my lightheadedness, about to prattle of all things that have no sense. First of all I did not understand things, though I knew him, and wondered where I was and how I came to be lying there, and he to be in my room. Then it all came back to me little by little, the attack upon my lover and my wound.

"Geoffrey," I whispered, "are you watching over me?"

He was like one who knows not what to say when he found that I was indeed in my right mind. But he had sense to command himself, and bade me, while he tenderly kissed my lips, keep silence and be quiet. Then he thanked God solemnly, for my lord was never one of those men who think they honour themselves and gain credit among their fellows by dishonouring their Creator. And then he left me, and in a moment my nurse came back, and seeing that I was in my senses again, and that the fever had left me—hands and brow being cool and moist—she, too, burst into a crying for thankfulness, and fell to kissing my hands and cheeks. Oh, poor woman! Because, now that my trouble was over, her own was to begin. I slept well that night, and next morning was stronger and able to take broth and other things which my nurse got for me. Presently I remembered Jenny, and asked that she might be brought to see me.

Then Alice changed colour and pretended not to hear; and when I repeated my question she said:

"Oh! Mistress Jenny is not at home. She has gone abroad on a visit."

With that I was fain to be content, although I saw that something had happened, and besides, being still weak and faint, was glad to forego further questions and go to sleep again.

Next day, I asked after madam, and again my nurse seemed confused, and put me off.

This set me wondering. It was strange, indeed, that neither Jenny nor her mother came to see me, and no message from the alderman. Yet a week passed, and it was not till I was quite well enough to hear any kind of news, however bad, that my lord entreated my permission for him to tell me things which, he said, gravely and grievously affected both himself and me.

He was, indeed, very grave, and told me the story little by little, fearful lest too many dreadful events at the same time might bring back my illness. Nor was it till many days afterwards that I was able to put everything together, and to understand it all.

When the alderman, one of the most benevolent and charitable citizens of London, received the boy whom he found starving with hunger and cold (as seemed from his pretending) on his door-step, he prepared for himself, even by this most Christian act, his own absolute and hopeless ruin. The boy, as I have said, rapidly received instruction, and proved himself a lad of astonishing quick parts, with great industry, sober habits, and respectful, obedient behaviour. The alderman who made haste to put the boy into his counting-house, thought he had never before been blessed with a servant more honest, more willing, and more capable; therefore, he advanced him rapidly; and when his own confidential clerk and chief factor died, he put the young man, then about twenty-five years of age, into his place.

Christopher March had all the keys, knew of all the securities, bills, drafts, mortgages, ventures, debts, and profit of the house; he opened the letters, received the customers, and carried on the correspondence. So blind, in short, did the alderman become, that he ceased, for the most part, to carry on his business himself, and was generally content with receiving his clerk's report.

The house held the private fortunes of many gentlemen of Virginia, besides that of my late father; it also held in trust the fortune of the Lord Eardeley, as we have seen, and of many widows, orphans, and poor pensioners, who had nothing to depend upon but the integrity of the alderman. Of that, indeed, there was never any doubt. The business of the house, again, was large, and the income of the alderman substantial. I know not what was the amount of his savings, but I have been well assured that there were

few merchants even in the great and prosperous city of London who surpassed him in fortune. His condition would have been more splendid, but for the thousand charitable actions which he continually practised. However, there was a capital stock in the alderman's hands, including that accumulated by his own thrift, the principal employed in his business, and the moneys entrusted to him, amounting to near a quarter of a million of money.

There was one thing that Christopher March could not do. He might persuade his master to ventures; he might deceive him with false reports; but he could never persuade him to have aught to do with South Sea stock, nor could he make him consent to sign papers without first learning and approving their contents. Therefore, as Geoffrey told me, every one of the receipts, agreements, and papers of advance, with regard to South Sea stock, in the counting-house were forgeries. Nor could there be any reasonable doubt as to the orgeries in the sale and transfer of mortgages and securities.

When the books of the house were placed in the hands of accountants skilled in examining and detecting frauds, it was discovered that, not only were these robberies of many years' standing, with the falsifying of accounts, and the forgery of authority given under the alderman's own hand, but that during the excitement of the late few months, Christopher March under cover of his forgeries had been trading, day after day, in South Sea stock, in bubble companies, and in any kind of reckless speculation. He had lent money for short terms of a week or a fortnight on South Sea stock; he had bought the stock on account of his master; he held shares in a dozen schemes, each of which pretended to be able by itself to make the fortune of the smallest shareholder; there was no project so wild and visionary, but that he must invest in it. Now, I do not believe that Christopher March was so foolish as to believe that his shares were going to make his fortune. Not at all; he was impelled into the struggle for shares by the desire to prey upon his fellow-creatures. They were like silly sheep; he was the wolf. He would sell his shares again when the price went up.

There were no methods of deception which were not tried by this wicked man. He received moneys and kept no account; he pretended to pay money and put it in his pocket; the liabilities of the house

remained unpaid, while the poor alderman was cheated by the books which told a lying tale; ships which brought rich cargoes were omitted in the books; great sales were not entered; and because Christopher March was the only man who in the later days approached the master, no one knew, no one suspected, what was being done; and those who thought there was something wrong in the house, once so respectable and of such tried integrity, attributed it to the speculation and madness of the hour, and hoped that Benjamin Medlycott would come well out of it.

None to speak to the old man; not one to warn him; none to remonstrate on the madness of his supposed investments—truly it was pitiful. And he, and all of us, living in a fool's paradise, having no suspicion, not the least. We girls occupied with our little love affairs, madam with her cards, and the whole house rushing headlong to ruin.

The trouble began with my wound. Next day, when the alderman called his household together for morning prayers, Jenny did not appear with the rest. Her mother sent to call her, for a lazy lie-abed. The maid came running downstairs, scared and pale—Mistress Jenny had not slept in her bed all night. A note was found lying on the pillow. "Dear parents," said poor silly Jenny, "I hope you will forgive me, for I have gone off with my Lysander. Your affectionate daughter."

There were no prayers, and no breakfast either, that morning. The alderman said nothing, but went to his counting-house, without even asking who Lysander was, and then sat down in great unhappiness. And truly it was a cruel thing of Jenny thus to abuse the love and confidence of a father who had ever treated her with so much indulgence and affection.

"My ward," he said presently to Christopher March, "is lying at the point of death, being murdered by a villain. My daughter has left me. What is the news with you, man, that you look so pale?"

"Am I pale, sir?" asked Christopher. "It is perhaps the sudden shock of your news. Mistress Jenny gone, sir? With whom?"

"I know not. That is her concern. Ask me no questions, Christopher. Let us to business. We build our estates and pile up our gold, and we know not who shall spend it."

Alas! poor man. His own gold had been already spent.

"Well"—he tried to speak as if he were no longer concerned about his daughter—"and what about the great madness?"

"The stock is falling, sir," said Christopher. "There is a run upon it. It was yesterday morning at six hundred, and is now at two hundred and ninety. Yet I cannot but think it will recover."

"Recover!" echoed the alderman. "Can a burst bladder recover its shape? Can a felon recover his honour? Go to, Christopher. Let us thank Heaven that we have been spared this infectious plague, and have continued sober citizens—to make our money by thrift, and save it for our—," children, he was going to say, but he refrained, and groaned, "Oh! Jenny, Jenny!"

Then there came into his counting-house two friends of his—grave and quiet merchants well known on 'Change and of his own company.

Christopher March bowed to them with humility, and immediately retired.

"How goes it, brother alderman?" asked one.

"Badly," replied my guardian. "It goes very badly."

"Why," said the other, "we guessed it, to our sorrow, and so we have come to render any help we can."

"It is neighbourly," said the alderman, "but the case is not one for friends. None can help me in such a plight. What is gone, is gone."

"Ay! That is true. Let us hope it is not so much as people have spread about."

"As much, man?" My guardian stared. "Why, what mean you?—as much as people say?"

"There are various rumours, Alderman Medlycott," the younger man interposed. "Some say that a hundred thousand would not clear you. Others think you may stand the loss of fifty thousand. Your creditors, of whom I am one, as you know—"

"Nay—nay," said the alderman, putting his hand on a great book. "Not so, friend Paterson. We have your quittances here. But what does this mean? Have I not trouble enough but there must be rumours to touch my credit?"

The visitors stared at one another.

"Truly, alderman," said the first, "we do not understand you. Tell us first what is this trouble that you lament."

"It is that my daughter hath left me, to fly with I know not whom; and that

my ward hath been foully wounded—I think to death; and that I have been cheated out of two thousand pounds by forgeries. Call ye that trouble?"

They sat down, like the friends of Job, and were silent for a space.

"I would not," said the elder, "add to thy grief, my old friend. But it is right to bid you be up and doing, because your name is very freely handled this morning."

"But why—why?"

"Why—why?" His visitor spoke angrily. "This is childishness, alderman. Know you not of the fall in South Sea stock?"

"Ay; what has that to do with me?"

Was the man mad? Did he understand nothing since his daughter had left him?

"Alderman," said the younger, "think. Your reason is tottering under the blows of Providence. Try to speak calmly. That quittance of mine you spoke of—where is it?"

"Surely, here," said the alderman, opening the book which contained receipts and quittances. "See—here it is—here—with your signature and date."

The merchant looked surprised; then he took the book in his hands, carried it to the window for better light, and looked at the signature.

"Here is villainy," he said; "that receipt is a forgery, alderman. I have not received the money from you."

"Forgery?—more forgeries?" murmured the alderman. "Call Christopher March. He is without."

He was not, however, without. He had gone away, leaving no message.

"Christopher March told me he had paid it himself," said my guardian. "But go on. Tell me more, if there is more. What is this about my credit? What is South Sea stock to me?"

"My friend," said the elder man, laying his hand on the alderman, "this is no time for trifling. We may all be ruined at any moment. Why—why—did this madness seize you?"

"I think," replied the alderman, "since you came here. What madness?"

"Doth not all the world know by this time, although you kept the secret so well, that of all the adventurers in this new stock and these new projects, no one has been more venturesome than yourself?"

The alderman looked from one to the other.

"Where is Christopher March?" he asked. "I cannot be going mad."

"Christopher March," replied his friend, "is the man who negotiated all your transactions for you."

"My transactions? Man, I have had no transactions. I have neither bought nor sold South Sea stock. I have never meddled with the accursed thing."

While they were all thus gazing upon each other there burst upon them a third man. His wig was disordered, his ruffles were loose.

"Mr. Alderman," he cried, "I crave your indulgence for a day or two; or for a week, perhaps, when, doubtless, I shall be able to repay the money."

"The money, friend? I know not you, and I know not your money. Tell me more."

"The ten thousand pounds you lent me on security—of my South Sea stock." He whispered this eagerly, looking with suspicion upon the other men.

The alderman gazed at him with a wonder full of affright.

"I lent you nothing," he said.

"Oh, pardon, sir. Believe me, I would defraud no one. You have my securities; they were bonds worth nine hundred apiece when I borrowed the money. Now, alas! they are worth but a poor hundred and thirty. But I will defraud no one."

And while he yet spake there came another, a creditor.

"I come," he said, "Mr. Alderman, from Mr. Ephraim Fouracre, your wife's draper, about your bill of five thousand pounds fourteen shillings and threepence, money lent on security of South Sea stock."

"Good heavens!" cried the first visitor. "Did he both borrow and lend on the stock?"

That it appeared was the case, for the very securities on which one man had borrowed ten thousand of Christopher March, had been pledged to this honest woollen-draper for five thousand.

"My friends," said the alderman, trying to assume a calm which he did not feel, "help me in this trouble. Is there witchcraft in it, think you?"

"Nay," replied the elder merchant. "But such villainy as the world, thank Heaven! seldom sees. Where is this man, this Christopher March, that we may bring him to the gallows?"

He never came back. The game was up, he felt, when the stock, which was at one thousand on August 1, steadily went

down and never recovered, day by day, its figure of the day before. Then despair seized him. Nothing now could save him. And on the morning after his desperate assault upon my lord, he vanished on the first appearance of visitors to his master.

I hardly know why he tried to murder Lord Eardesley. My fortune was gone; my lord's was gone; the moneys entrusted to the alderman were all stolen and wasted. As regards the forgeries, they were but a small trifle in comparison with the rest—the countless pile of frauds, forgeries, and deceits, by which he had carried on his wicked course, and lulled his master into confidence. Why, then, did he try to murder my lord? Perhaps, because this crime was the first discovered, and if followed up would lead to the discovery of all the rest. But one never knows the secret springs of action in the career of any man, even a good man. Let it suffice that Christopher March was a murderer, if ever there was one, though his victim escaped him.

Now all that day the alderman sat, steady as a rock, in the counting-house. Little by little the whole truth was got at. One man after the other called; one after the other revealed a fresh tale of treachery. It is true that most of the frauds had been committed quite recently, and evidently with a view to meet the most pressing claims rising out of old ones, so as to put off the evil day as long as possible. By nightfall the poor old man knew all. He had lost not only his own fortune, but his good name. Hardly a merchant of credit but had been cheated by him—that is, in his name; those who had entrusted their money to him—the poor widows and orphans—had lost it; the Gentlemen Adventurers of Virginia who had made him their banker had lost all their savings; men like Lord Eardesley who had deposited with him their few thousands found their little fortunes stolen. I, the great Virginian heiress, who had inherited the thrift and accumulations of three generations of prosperity, had lost every farthing. Of all my hundred thousand pounds, my much envied "plum," not one penny was left.

This, all this, did the poor alderman have to learn and to endure. It took many days to get at the whole, to discover the extent of the ruin. Yet his creditors—the poor women whose daily bread was gone, the tradesmen who saw

no way left except bankruptcy and perhaps a lifelong prison—were kind to him. He had been so honest, he had been so benevolent, so religious, so charitable, that none upbraided him. There were no reproachful eyes upon him when, the accountants having laid everything bare, nothing more remaining to be learned, he called his creditors together, told them all, which indeed they knew already, and spoke his farewell speech.

"My friends," he said, "I am old, and have been young; yet never have I seen the righteous man beg his bread. I have been righteous, according to my lights. God knoweth when we do amiss. As for this trouble that hath fallen upon you all, I pray you to remember that man is prone to err; I have been over-confident, and I have been deceived and robbed. In this cursed South Sea stock, remember, I pray you, that I had neither part nor lot. Forgeries, forgeries all around me—with forgeries have I been undone."

His lips trembled as he tottered slowly to the door. Lord Eardesley, who was there, supported him from the counting-house to his own parlour. There sat his wife, sad and terrified.

They brought him wine, but he refused to drink it, sitting mute and sorrowful. His wife knelt before him, crying and sobbing, and imploring pardon for all her follies. He meekly bade her rise, saying that she had been a good wife to him, albeit fond of cards, and that during the years which were left to him and to her, there would be little fear of cards interfering between them. Then he turned to Lord Eardesley, and very piteously lamented the loss of his fortune and that of his betrothed, myself.

"Nevertheless," he said, just and righteous to the last, "I lament not so much for you, my lord, and my dear ward Elinor, as for those poor women—those widows—whose honourable bread is gone. For who will help them? who will feed them, unless it is He who fed the prophet? And chiefly let us pray for that wretched boy, Christopher March, who hath brought this terrible trouble upon us, that he may be led to repent."

Neither his wife nor Lord Eardesley spoke. I think that at the moment they would rather have joined in prayer that he might speedily meet with the rope that was to hang him.

"Wife," he said, trying to rise, "let me to bed. I have much to think of."

They led him to his room, and presently left him.

All night long his wife sat beside him watching. His eyes were closed, but he was not sleeping, and from time to time he spoke. Yet at last he dropped asleep.

Early in the morning he sat up, looked about him, and asked, in his usual voice, if all was well. Being assured that all was well, he fell back, and slept like a child.

They awakened him at ten in the forenoon. His face was rather pale, but smiling and happy. And—oh! wonderful interposition of Providential benevolence!—he knew nothing, simply nothing of what had happened. My poor old guardian had gone mad.

Afterwards, when I was recovered, Lord Eardesley took me to a place where they kept him. His friends, the company over which he had presided, and the Court of Aldermen, could not bear to think that the good old man, reduced to the utmost penury, should suffer in his lunacy. They placed him in the house of a physician, where but a few madmen were received—not the great awful Hospital of St. Bethlehem—and provided for him a room to himself, with such creature comforts as were judged best for him. Hither came, every day to sit with him, soothe him, and please him, his faithful wife. Was it possible that this good, devoted, and honourable creature could have been the woman who once found all her happiness in cards, and all her hope in a good hand? It was but once that I saw him. We passed through a hall whose horrors were enough to drive faith in the goodness of Heaven away for ever from the breast, where poor creatures were chained by short lengths to the wall like wild beasts, and wandered round and round like them, crying and howling with rage and fury and despair. When we reached my poor old guardian's room, we found him playing a game of backgammon with his wife. He did that all day long; he never tired of it; she played with him, without a murmur. And when he won, he would laugh and crow.

He did not know us. He only invited us to sit down and watch the game.

The only sign of any recollection of the past that he gave was once or twice a week, when he used to laugh feebly, rub his hands, and say:

"Wife, I always said that South Sea stock was no better than any bubble."

CHAPTER VIII. HOME AGAIN.

It was in August that I was stricken; it was in late September that the fever left me; it was in October that I learned all, the wreck of our fortunes, the ruin and madness of my poor guardian, the elopement of Jenny.

"My Nelly," said Geoffrey, "we have nothing; neither you nor I. The very daily expenses of this house are maintained by money borrowed from a friend, who lends it, I know, willingly enough. Will you come with me to my poor barren acres in Wales, where we may live, somehow, like rustics, on pig, cow, sheep, garden, and orchard. The acres are broad enough, I know; but they are overgrown with wood and corrupted with marsh. No one will take my farms; there is not a tenant in the place. Yet what else can I offer you?"

To me it seemed like a haven of bliss. Anything to get away from London, from this dreadful place of corruption whence, like the Valley of Hinnom, the stench and flame went up to the high heavens. Anything to change the current of my thoughts. Wales! The broad barren acres! Why, the place would be like Virginia. I should see, once more, forests and hills.

I hesitated not; I would marry my lord where and when he pleased. We were married at the parish church, at St. Olave's, by the good old clergyman, whose manner of reading the service reminded me so much of the alderman. He was proud to marry a nobleman, and as there was no wedding feast he made us a little speech in the vestry-room. He reminded us that adversity, like good fortune, was a jade which came and went, according to the behests of high Heaven; that we must not look forward to a continuation of those buffets by which our worldly effects had been suddenly and violently bereft from us, but rather must cast around for means to use that rank, to which it had pleased God to call my husband, as a stepping-stone to fortune. Above all, we might bear in mind that the world is for the young, that success is for the brave, and that where there is no ambition there is no struggle, and where no struggle there no glory. He meant well, the good old man, and when I took him aside and asked him if he knew aught of my poor Jenny, the tears ran down his cheeks and into the corners of his great fat lips. But he knew nothing.

So we were married. There was no ringing of bells; there was no wedding

feast; there were no rejoicings; my old nurse was present, crying, my only friend; the clerk gave me away; no one was in the church; outside the carts and waggons drove up and down the narrow street; the drivers swore; the porters set down their loads and fought; the signs hanging over the shop windows creaked and groaned in the autumn breeze; and no one took any notice of it.

After the ceremony I bade farewell for a while to my nurse, who returned for the present to the desolate house on Tower Hill, and we took coach to my lord's lodgings in Bury Street.

Here we remained for a fortnight or three weeks. He had but few friends—where should a poor nobleman find friends?—but these came to see me and invited us to their great houses, and were as civil as if we were rich instead of being paupers.

In those days we talked a great deal about our future. We were young, and laughed at the disaster of losing all our money—at least, I did. We were to go, we said, to Wales; we would repair a corner of the ruined castle, and farm such of the land as was not too barren; we would live away from the world, forgotten, and cultivate the simple mode of life praised by philosophers. That was our dream. I thought so much of Wales that I forgot Virginia. But one day a sudden thought came into my head.

"My dear," I said, "the man Christopher March could not have gambled away my estate in Virginia."

He started. "Surely not," he said, "unless your title-deeds were in his hands."

"I believe we have no title-deeds," I replied. "I should wonder, however, if any would dare to dispute the right of a Carellia. Geoffrey, look into it. Oh! my dear, we are not poor but rich. There is no estate like it in Virginia. It produces more than a thousand pounds by the year, and might produce two in careful hands. Geoffrey," I added, laying my hand on his arm and looking into his noble face, "shall we go to Virginia, you and I, and grow rich on our own lands?"

Well; he was strangely moved at the proposal, and went away to consult a lawyer. By this time all the poor alderman's papers were in the hands of attorneys. It was discovered that he had never possessed my title-deeds, which were still in Virginia. Here was good news, indeed; and now my whole thought was how to get away from this London, this city of

villainy and rogues, and find myself back in my own country, where, if we lived among thieves, which was true, they were in bondage and enduring hardness.

My husband reasoned with me soberly about it. He was at first averse to leaving England. He thought that if we had a thousand pounds a year we might live on his estate in Wales, build a house, and, though we could not hope to make a figure, yet we might maintain a household in some degree worthy of our rank. I replied that I was as careful as he could be to keep up the dignity of a peer; but that we must remember how the plantation was governed by servants, who, though they might be now men of integrity, might also become through temptation men like Christopher March himself, and rob us of all we had. This was so true that it turned the scale, and my husband consented to embark for Virginia, there to become a planter of tobacco.

Now, after my marriage—though this I did not learn till long after—my nurse, free at last to remember her own private troubles, set to work to find her son. She rightly guessed that he would, while the hue-and-cry was hot after him, take refuge in those dens and dark holes of London known to none but the professional rogue. She knew these places, and had lived in them in the days of her degradation. Now she began to seek them out afresh. She put on an old and ragged dress, carried a basket, assumed the manner of a decrepit woman, and ventured boldly into the dark dens where an honest person's life was not worth the chance of a fourpenny-piece.

Here she asked for her son by his old name. Some knew nothing of him; some remembered the name; some told, with pride, how he had become a great gentleman, and was robbing on the grand scale. This was no new thing among them; for though it was, perhaps, the first time that a pickpocket and common thief had become a City merchant, yet it was quite common for one of them, when he had gotten a gallant suit of clothes and a sword, to become a gamester and adventurer of the dice, and so raffle it among the best while fortune lasted.

At first, however, she could learn nothing about him. But after patience for three or four days, she was rewarded. It was a woman, quite a young woman, who answered her whispered enquiries with a fierce question, and the usual profane oath, what she wanted to know about him for.

"Because," said Alice boldly, "because I am his mother."

"You're not," replied the girl. "His mother was hanged."

My nurse shook her head.

"I was not hanged," she said, showing her hand, which was branded by the executioner. "I was reprieved and sent to Virginia. My name is Kate Collyer, and I want to find my son. You know that the hue-and-cry is out for him, and the reward is proclaimed. They will hang him if they catch him. The mob will tear him to pieces if they can."

"How am I to know if you are his mother?"

"Because I say so. But that, I doubt, is not enough. See, then, tell him this." She whispered in her ear. "Ask him who could know that except his mother. Then take me to him."

She sat down in the doorway and waited. The girl, with a look of suspicion and distrust, walked swiftly down the narrow and filthy street they call Houndsditch, and disappeared.

Alice waited for about an hour. She knew the kind of people. If she got up and went away, she would be suspected; if she remained where she was, suspicion might be lulled. Presently the girl returned.

"You may come with me," she said; "but if you have deceived me or betrayed him, I will kill you—remember that."

I know not where the girl took Alice. They passed from one lane full of rogues and thieves to another; everywhere wickedness, profanity, and drinking. At last the girl stopped at a house, and, opening the door, led Alice to a small room at the back, dark and dirty, where Christopher March was sitting alone. His fine cloth coat and waistcoat were exchanged for a suit of common workman's clothes; a red cotton handkerchief tied up his neck; he had discarded his wig and grown his own hair; he looked in his new disguise what he was, the thief and burglar of twenty years before—grown up, but not reformed.

When he saw Alice, he sprang to his feet with an oath.

"You?" he cried. "She said it was my mother. You? The nurse?"

"Yes; it is I, my son."

Alice sat down upon the bed and sighed heavily.

"I only knew, on the night when you tried to murder Lord Eardesley, that you were my son."

"Dick told you, did he? Then he knew, too, and kept it from me. Yet I thought I saw him killed."

"Such as he take time to die. They are allowed to live a little; so that they may tell something of their wickedness before they die. He told me—he—that you were the boy whom, in an evil hour, I brought into the world."

"Well," said Christopher, "if you come to that, we were all brought into the world at an evil hour. We live and thrive, and then we get hanged. Fool that I was, when I might have lived honestly and died in my bed."

"He told me that when the gang was broken up—"

"It lasted two years after you were lagged at Bristol. We thought you were hanged."

"They respited me at the last moment. I have been in Virginia."

"I know—go on."

"That when the gang was broken up in consequence of the cry after the great diamond robbery—"

"My doing!" said Christopher, laughing. All the years of his education and work in an honest office had not destroyed that pride in a successful villainy, which was taught him in his infancy, and by the poor woman who stood before him repentant and shamed.

"You were sent, to get out of the way, into the very heart of the enemy's camp, to the house of Alderman Medlycott himself; you were educated by him; taken into the house by him; paid well by him; and, in return, you robbed him."

"Why, mother," cried the son in great surprise, "you are not come here to preach—you!"

It was part of her punishment. Her very son, who had been for fifteen years and more under godly tutors, could not even yet understand that a wicked woman could even turn away from her wickedness.

She shook her head.

"No, no," she said, "I shall not preach. For you I can only pray. But this is foolish talk. Let us rather consider how you may best escape."

"Why," he replied, "I think I am safest here. Bess, here—but you don't know Bess—will look after me."

"You are never safe, where there are so many who know you. Why, there is a hundred guineas reward offered for your apprehension. Once caught, they will have no mercy on you, be sure of that."

"I am sure," he said; "I knew it all along. Why, what odds a little danger? I am not caught yet, and perhaps there is many a jolly day between this and the journey to Tyburn; isn't there, Bess?"

The girl laughed uneasily. She was one of those who can never contemplate without a shudder the certainty of her doom, and the uncertainty of its appointed time.

"Confess, mother," the hardened villain went on, "I have done well. A dozen years of good behaviour, with church on Wednesday and Friday evenings, as well as Sunday; ten years of slavery and hard work, and then the reward came—a rich and unexpected reward: the confidence of the most confiding merchant in London; a double set of books; the handling of vast sums of money; all day long robbing the alderman; all night long gaming and drinking, and living like a lord. A fine time, Bess, wasn't it?"

"Yes, it was," she said; "pity it is over."

"I would have made it last longer, but my luck became so bad; I believe it was your girl, Elinor Carellis, who brought me bad luck. Little she knew that every evening some of her fortune was being melted away in Covent Garden."

"Why did you dare to make love to her?"

"He make love to her!" cried the girl, springing to her feet like a mad thing. "He make love to her?"

"Easy, Bess, easy—sit down." Christopher took her by the waist, and sat her on his knee. "You don't understand. Why, girl, I wanted her money to put back the rest—Lord Eardeley's, and the alderman's, and the others. Then we should have started fair again; he would have made me a partner, and all would have gone merrily."

She was not satisfied, and her colour came and went, while her breath was quick and her eyes bright.

"I should like to kill her," she murmured between her teeth.

"You need not be jealous," said Alice; "she is married and gone away."

"Ho! ho!" laughed Christopher, "without a penny-piece. That's revenge worth having, isn't it, mother?"

Then his mother grew sick at heart, and weary, and rose to go.

"I cannot see you any more. I cannot bear to look upon you, or to hear you talk. But I would aid you to escape before it is yet too late. Perhaps, if you escape now, your

heart may be softened in after years. But I warn you. Among all the rogues and thieves who surround you, there must be many—try to think how many—who know where you are hiding, and who will be tempted by the reward. A hundred guineas! It is a great sum of money. Leave London; go where no one knows you. Go where you may find some honest means of livelihood. See, I have brought you all my savings." She drew out a little bag, and poured some money into her lap. Christopher and the girl bent eagerly over it with greedy eyes. "There are ten guineas and some silver pieces. Take them and fly for your life out of the City of Destruction."

There was no hesitation about taking the money; not the least. Nor about promising whatever the man's mother wished.

"I will go," he said. "I will go this very evening. We will try the north. This will keep us for a while, and then we shall see. Yes, mother"—he thrust his tongue in his cheek for the amusement of the girl—"honesty is the only thing. You are right. Henceforth I am a respectable tradesman, ruined by the wicked directors of the South Sea Scheme."

She left him without taking his hand, or saying more words. And she looked to learn that he had broken his word, was still lurking in London, and had been captured.

All this she told me later, when we were far away from land on the blue ocean.

Then we began our preparations for Virginia. We wanted little, because everything was already on the plantation. My lord's interest procured us a passage on board the Gloucester, one of His Majesty's ships, under orders for James Town, and were to set sail at Portsmouth.

A week before we started a letter was brought to me by a meanly-dressed, poor little creature of a servant-maid. It was addressed to Mistress Elinor Carellis, care of Lord Eardeley.

Oh, Heaven! it was from my dear, flighty, foolish Jenny.

"Dearest Nelly," she began, "I know not if I dare to address you as I used. Forgive me and pity me. I am very unhappy. I know about my father's bankrupt condition and his madness. Pray Heaven it be not caused partly by my undutiful conduct. Come quickly to me, for I have much to tell you. My mother will not forgive me, and my husband is

such a wretch that you will pity me when you know. But, oh! that such a man as Christopher March should have been allowed to live! Your affectionate Jenny."

The letter was dated from a street near High Holborn, called Fetter Lane, where I supposed she had found lodgings. My husband, who would not let me go alone, accompanied me, and we carried with us the little half-starved girl in a coach.

Alas! the street was narrow and noisy, full of shops, and crowded with rough people. Jenny's lodging was in a court leading off the street. Who, then, was her Lysander? Could he have deceived her for the sake of the money which it might be reasonably supposed she would have?

The girl led us into a mean house with narrow passages and dirty stairs. In a room at the back, ill-furnished, squalid, and unwashed, I found the poor girl. She was in dishabille, her hair hanging about her shoulders, her feet in slippers. Before her stood, cowering, the man who had carried her off. But was this Lysander? Why, all the bravery had gone out of the man; the ruffle and smirk; the square carriage of his elbows; the toss of his head; all were gone. His clothes were shabby and common; his wig lay on the table, and a handkerchief tied up his head. I think they had been quarrelling, for when Jenny heard our footsteps and turned to me, her face was flushed and her lips were quivering.

"Nelly!" she said, throwing herself into my arms. "Oh, Nelly, Nelly! what a wretch—what a foolish wretch I have been!"

Then she tore herself from me passionately, and placed me in a chair, while she pointed the finger of scorn at her husband.

"Sit there. You shall hear, you and my lord, what I have suffered from this man."

Lysander looked as if he fain would escape, but knew not how. I do not think he was a brave man, because his knees shook while his wronged wife poured out her tale.

"You know how he used to write me poems, Nelly? The poems were copied. You remember his letters? They were stolen from a book. The wretch hath no knowledge of writing, save of copying for a shop cashbook. He told me a tale of himself: he said he was the son of a country squire—oh! lying villain!—that his father wished him to marry a lady of title; that his only chance was a secret marriage, after which his father would

certainly relent; that he would never be able to persuade the alderman to any secret course; and that if I would elope with him, all would go well afterwards.

"Nelly! you know what a fool I have always been, loving to read about men and love-making—all this went to my heart. It seemed so noble in a gentleman to fall in love with the daughter of a citizen: it was grand to be carried away. No secret marriage in London would do with my fine gentleman; no Fleet marriage, if you please; nothing but a coach and four, and Scotland.

"So I went. Oh! the long, long journey on the road; and the shaking over the roads; but who so grand as this great gentleman, if you please? His hand was ready with a guinea for the post-boy, and a crown for boots; while at the sound of horses on the road none so brave as he, with his sword ready loosened in the scabbard, and his pistols before him in the coach. 'If we are caught,' he said, 'if we have to fight, I will die rather than surrender my Clarissa.' I felt proud of being about to have a husband who, if he was little in stature, had yet so high a spirit.

"We got safely to Scotland, after many days, and there we were married.

"Then we came home again; but without the grandeur with which we went. This time we travelled to York by posting, and then all the way to London by the coach.

"When I got to town I learned all that had happened; your wound; my father's ruin and illness; the villainy of Christopher March. I thought my heart would break to think of all the troubles that had fallen upon us. Yet there was some comfort; I should not be a burden upon my friends, poor and in misery. I should, perhaps, be able to help them."

She stopped, and the miserable man, now that the climax was approaching, trembled not only in his knees, but all over, while a cold moisture broke out on his forehead.

"One more misfortune was to fall upon me—one more trouble. I deserved it. I must not repine; but it was harder to bear than all the rest. Oh, Nelly! See him now. Does he look at all like the son of a country esquire? Hath he any air of gentle blood and noble birth? Does he look like a man who would marry a lady of rank? I found out at length, but not until his money was come to an end. I found out, I say, from his own confession, who he is and what. Nelly, he made the

money for our wedding journey by gambling. He was lucky, and won enough to pay for all in a single night. And he is not a gentleman at all. He is but just out of his apprenticeship. He is a hosier by trade. His name is Joshua Crump. I am plain Mistress Crump, wife of the hosier's apprentice, who was once Jenny Medlycott, and daughter of an alderman who had passed the chair! Oh! oh! oh!"

She paused. Then, fired to fury with the thought of her wrongs, she cried again, with a passion of tears, "Oh, villain!" and gave her husband, one with each hand, two such mighty boxes on the ear that I expected, little as she was, some dreadful injury would be done to him. I pulled her from him; for, indeed, she was now quite mad with passion, and no longer mistress of herself.

Joshua Crump, all this time, said nothing, only he gazed with appealing eyes to me, as if for protection.

My husband stepped forward while I was soothing Jenny.

"Tell me," he asked the man, "have you any money?"

"No, my lord, none, except a single guinea."

"And when that is done, what will you do next?"

"I know not, my lord, indeed."

"Are you not a pretty villain, thus to carry away a young lady deceived by these lies?"

"I am, my lord. Yet I thought her father was rich, and would forgive us."

"Come outside, and speak with me privately."

They went outside, and I heard my husband speaking gravely. They talked for a quarter of an hour. Then my lord returned alone.

"Come, Nelly," he said; "the coach waits. Jenny, child, will you come with us and share our lot? Your husband will let you go, and it shall be as if you had never been married."

I dressed her hair, and tied on her hat, and led her crying and sobbing down the stairs.

She never saw her husband again.

So, on a fine morning in late autumn, we left London for good; and rode, stopping at Guildford for the night, all together—my husband, myself, Jenny, and Nurse Alice, with my husband's new man. And so we journeyed to Portsmouth, where we embarked on board His Majesty's man-of-war Gloucester, seventy-five guns,

then lying off Spithead, and presently were standing gallantly across the open sea, all sails set, making for my dear Virginia.

My story is finished. It only remains for me to say a few words more.

First, I have been a happy wife in the affection of a great and noble husband. We lived on our plantation, without once wishing to leave it, for five-and-twenty years. At the end of that time, our affairs having prospered beyond our expectation, my husband was seized with a longing to go home and live the rest of his life upon his own estate in Wales, where, he thought, he might build a house, and cultivate the ground, and, perhaps, help the advancement of our eldest son. The second son we left in Virginia. He hath taken the surname of Carellis, and I hope that there may never fail a Carellis in the colony to illustrate by his own virtues and worth those of the English race. So, we returned, and, in the autumn of our lives, before old age dims my memory or impairs my faculties, I have written this story of my sorrows and my joys, and have called it, fondly, after the name by which my dear husband, who hath ever been my lover, still delights to call his wife.

About a year after we landed my husband had a letter from London in which an unknown correspondent informed him that he would be interested in learning the death of Master Joshua Crump, formerly a hosier's apprentice. I showed the letter to Jenny, who first looked grave, as was becoming, and then became joyful.

"After all," she said, "it was the only thing he could do to prove his repentance. I think better of him for dying, and perhaps I may forgive him altogether in time. But now I can think of nothing but that I am free."

She was; and a few weeks later she married a young gentleman of great promise and a considerable estate upon the Potomac River. She has brought up a large family of handsome children, and no one but myself and my husband ever knew the story of her elopement. Alice knew, of course, but Alice never talked. And here I may relate that when (after many years) we returned to London, the first time I walked again in Cheapside I espied a monstrous great sign of a golden glove hanging over my head, and read the name written below of J. Crump. I remembered Lysander, and moved with

curiosity, I entered the shop. Why, there behind the counter, stood Lysander himself. He was little changed, except for a certain smugness of aspect peculiar to the thriving London hosier. He bowed, and asked me what I might pleased to lack.

I leaned across the counter and whispered:

"Hath Lysander quite forgot his Clarissa?"

He trembled and turned pale, and his yard wand dropped from his hands.

"Madam," he whispered, "I know your ladyship now. You are Lady Eardesley. For Heaven's sake! I am married and the father of ten—"

"Fear not, Lysander," I replied, "your secret is safe from me. After the death of her first husband Clarissa found consolation in the arms of a second."

So I left him abashed and confounded.

We had been in Virginia five years or so when our overseer came to me one morning, my husband being then shooting in the forest, with a tale about a certain convict servant whom he had bought at James Town, and conveyed, with others, to the estate. He was a man about thirty-three or four, who had been found guilty and sentenced to be hanged, but, by the clemency of the judge, was branded and sent to the plantations. The offence was shop-lifting. This gloomy story was too common to move my pity. But, the overseer added, when the man heard that Lord Eardesley had bought him, he fell upon his knees, and begged that he might never be seen by his lordship.

A dreadful suspicion seized me. I bade the overseer lead me to the man. He was sitting in chains, waiting to be told off for a field gang. I never went near our wretched people on their first arrival, or when they were at work in the fields, for the sound of the lash, even though one knew that it was part of the punishment, or felt that if it was a negro receiving chastisement it was part of his education in religion and civilisation, never failed to bring the tears to my eyes.

The overseer called him and he lifted his head. At sight of me he fell grovelling and crying at my feet. For it was Christopher March.

I said nothing to him, good or bad, but being assured that it was the wicked wretch himself, thus placed by Providence in our hands, I left him and went home. When my husband returned I told him all.

It would be too long a story to relate how my lord sent for this rogue, whose sins had found him out, and discoursed with him upon his miraculous escape and the occasion mercifully laid open to him for repentance, and how the man with plentiful tears declared that he was already deeply penitent. We kept from Alice the knowledge that her son was on the estate until such time as the overseers reported favourably of the man's good behaviour and willingness. We then granted to nurse, for her own use, a strip of ground at the far north of our plantation, which had a cottage on it; and we assigned her own son to her as servant, so that no one on the estate should know of the relationship.

When she died, a year or two later, it was in the thankful confidence that her son was as deeply and sincerely penitent as she was herself.

I never greatly believed in the repentance of one whose sins showed so hard a heart, but I was glad that his hanging did not take place until after the death of his mother. He was executed at James Town, and hung in chains, for a highway robbery, quite unnecessary and wanton, because at the time he was in easy circumstances.

As I write these last lines, the setting sun is shining on the Welsh hills; in the gardens are playing my grandchildren; sitting about me are my three daughters, happy matrons all; walking up the broad valley I see my husband, and, with him, two gallant sons. My heart is full.

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All Clergy, Parents, Guardians, and Schoolmasters, are requested to read this carefully.



Edited by W. H. G. KINGSTON.

CONTENTS OF No. 1.

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By the EDITOR, Author of "Peter the Whaler," "Mark Seaworth," "The Three Midshipmen," "The Three Lieutenants," &c. Illustrated by J. P. ATKINSON.

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PUBLISHERS' ADDRESS.

MORE than a hundred years ago, when George the Second was king; before Railways were thought of, before the Penny Postage was established, and before the wonders of the Telegraph were known, the House at the Old Corner of St. Paul's Churchyard was familiar to nearly every boy in Great Britain, as the place at which the books they delighted in were to be bought. Since that time many books by very popular authors, have been issued from that house, and the most favourite author of them all has been Mr. W. H. G. KINGSTON, who wrote "Peter the Whaler," "Mark Seaworth," "The Three Midshipmen," &c., &c. But as books are expensive, and our boys often have to wait a long time before they are able to get such as they want, it is about to give them the opportunity of buying a Series of **New Stories by their Favourite Authors for One Penny a week.**

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THE UNION JACK, "the Jolliest Paper going."

The present BISHOP OF ROCHESTER, in answering the question what is the best means of counteracting the corrupting influence of the pernicious periodicals for boys, which are so widely circulated, says,—

"Too publicly to denounce it might be to advertise it more widely, and to play into the enemy's hand. To forbid the children to purchase it would be to give an order we have no sort of power to get obeyed, and to put into their heads what it is our great object to keep out. To deplore it and do nothing is but the silly whimpering of a feeble and dishonest sentimentalism. St. Paul's method is the only reasonable one. 'Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.'"

It is in perfect sympathy with this view that **THE UNION JACK** has been projected. Boys will read Tales, and the responsibility is upon those who provide them with literature to take care that it is of the best; the influence of much that is put into their hands is too frequently shown by the revelations of our Police Courts. And in putting before them a series of pure and healthy Stories, we claim the support of all who are concerned in the moral welfare of our British Boys.

All Clergy will find it to their advantage to aid in its distribution, and they may do it in perfect confidence that its pages will always inculcate right principles and manly virtues.

Parents, Schoolmasters, and Teachers will welcome it as supplementing their efforts to train their charges to become true English Gentlemen.

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Employers of Labour in Shops and Factories, by helping its circulation among their young assistants, will do much towards keeping them honest and upright, inasmuch as where **THE UNION JACK** is read the poisonous "Penny Dreadful" will not be patronized.

The Boys Themselves as soon as they read it will be certain to tell their companions about it, and by enclosing in their letters the notices which the Publishers will be happy to give them, and sending them to their friends, will materially conduce to its prosperity.

The following are the names of some of the Authors who have promised to contribute stories to **THE UNION JACK** :—

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Author of "Buttons," "The Men of the Backwoods."

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"Times" Correspondent during the Russo-Turkish War.

MOY THOMAS,

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GEORGE A. HENTY,

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It is impossible, however, to quote one-tenth of the favourable notices which Mr. KINGSTON and his books have received, but the above may be considered as fairly representative extracts.

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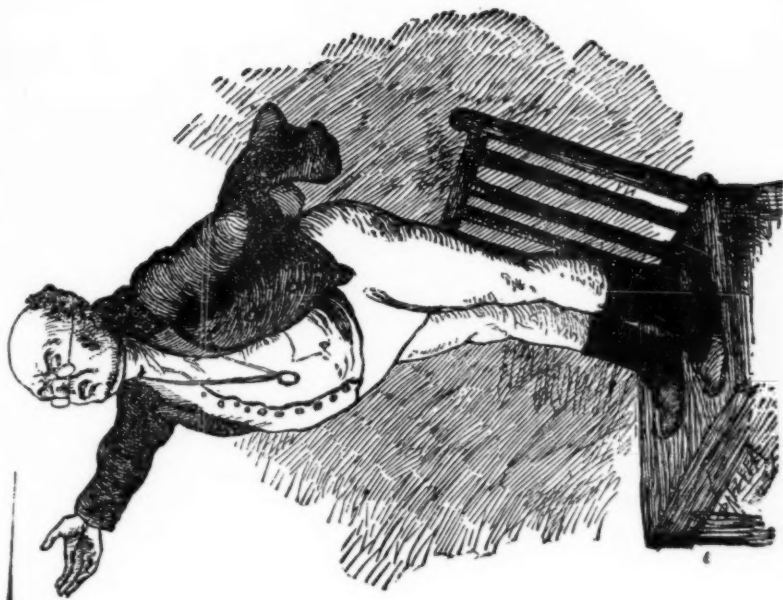
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The Rates for other ages, or limited to other periods (as 7 or 14), may be had on application.

THE 41st ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING was held on 26th March.

The **NEW BUSINESS** reported was—1776 Policies for £1,035,102, with £35,129 of Premiums. The Total Receipts in the year, including Interest, were £494,310; while the Expenses of Management were 10·57 per cent of the Premium Income, or 7·53 of the gross Receipts.

The **REALISED FUNDS** at 31st December 1878 were £3,379,421, having increased in the year by £277,522, a larger sum than has yet been reported by any Office in the Kingdom.

The **REPORT** further stated that, "Having regard to the general depreciation of Securities, which has resulted from the severe commercial crisis through which the country has passed, the Directors considered it would be expedient, and satisfactory to the Members, that at this time a thorough examination should be made of all the Securities;" and after a careful and exhaustive examination, the Committee reported that all the Loans were properly vouched, the Securities in complete order, and the Investments in a sound and satisfactory condition.

Copies of the REPORT, with full STATEMENTS of PRINCIPLES, may now be had.

EDINBURGH, October 1879.

JAMES WATSON, *Manager.*

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The Scottish Provident Institution.

EXTRACT FROM "THE REVIEW" OF 16TH APRIL 1879.

THE SCOTTISH PROVIDENT INSTITUTION is a remarkable illustration of the success of sound principles, backed up by unflagging energy. The field of life assurance is not so very large that the identity of any one single Office of magnitude can at any time be obscured, but we venture to say that were it ten times as large, the personality of the Scottish Provident would make itself conspicuously felt. It has laid itself out for a distinct class of business, and, we are bound to admit, has got it. Its transactions have gone on increasing until it may fairly claim that it is *the* coming Scottish office. Of all the Scottish offices there are only two even now which have larger funds than the Scottish Provident. One of these was founded in 1815, and the other in 1825, whilst the Scottish Provident was not founded until 1837.

The special line taken by this Institution is, that it gives the maximum amount of *present* insurance for the minimum amount which may be safely accepted as premiums, and it fortifies this position by working its business at a very low rate of expenditure. The present rate of outgo in the way of management expenses and commission is at the exceptionally low figure of about ten per cent on the premiums and seven per cent on the gross income. The maximum amount of net assurances being secured at the lowest rate to assurers, the question of the division of profits is settled in a most equitable manner. Those who by their early death cause a loss to the common fund, receive the exact amount of their policy, whilst those who live longer, and who have to make up for the losses caused by the shortlived policyholders, have this loss minimised by the distribution amongst them of all the surplus that may be earned.

That this surplus may be a very considerable one is beyond all question, in spite of the low premiums charged. The surplus is earned in two ways. First, by the very low rate of expenditure of the Institution; second, by the gain on interest beyond the estimated rate, which has been fully a half per cent free of income-tax. This upon three millions yields a very handsome sum. The additions to the policies are further increased by the reservation of all the surplus for the long livers. The result has been, that a few policies effected on the low scale of premiums charged by the Institution have now been actually doubled, and some policies ranking under even the first division of profits have

been increased from twenty to thirty per cent in value. The popularity of the plans, and the deep root they have taken amongst the reflective class of intending assurers can be best illustrated by the fact, that the office, although amongst ninety-two British offices it ranks forty-eighth in age, has yet, in point of accumulated funds, risen to the eighth place; and further has, during 1878, added above £277,000 sterling to its funds, after paying nearly £200,000 in claims and annuities.

A further illustration of the rapid manner in which the Scottish Provident is making headway was given in a recent number of this Journal, in which it was shown that out of about a hundred offices there was only one which has made a greater increase to its funds during the eight years 1870-77. This single office was founded twenty-two years before its vigorous rival, which may not be without hope of overtaking even this formidable opponent within a reasonable limit of time. There can be no question as to which of the plans is the more attractive to the ordinary insurer; and the greater the knowledge of the public on the subject, the greater the tendency to select offices which offer the greatest advantages to all sections of society. Whether the life be long or short, all must feel satisfied under the Scottish Provident system; for although all may be in equal health at starting, yet changes soon begin to appear.

A man who dies before his premiums and interest equal the amount to be received by his family has made an actual profit out of the office. Those who live beyond this point get *all* the excess of payments back again, and thus both classes are satisfied. To all the system is economical, whilst the safety and solidity of the Institution are beyond all question. It is gratifying to observe that the commercial depression of 1878 has but slightly affected the Scottish Provident, which still keeps its million of new business; and it is further of advantage to know that the Board of Directors have specially overhauled all the securities and books, and have found everything, as was to be expected, in the most perfect order. It does not do in these days to rely exclusively on reputations; but there are some which, like that of the Scottish Provident, the more they are rubbed the brighter they shine. . . . The statements of the Board, and the accounts are, as usual, lucid and interesting, and will well repay perusal.

[Since 1st January 1870, when the first official statement of accounts was made to the Board of Trade, the Funds of the Institution have increased by £1,700,000.]

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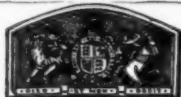
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